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THE PEARL OF THE ANTILLES

OR

AN ARTIST IN CUBA

58763

BY

WALTER GOODMAN

HENRY S. KING & CO.
65 CORNHILL & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
1873

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TO

MY TRAVELLING-COMPANION AND BROTHER-ARTIST

SEÑOR DON JOAQUIN CUADRAS

OF CUBA

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

IN REMEMBRANCE OF OUR LONG AND UNINTERRUPTED FRIENDSHIP

AT HOME AND ABROAD

PREFACE.

CUBA having lately become a prominent object of attention, both to Europe and America, I venture to think that any trustworthy information that can be given respecting it, may prove acceptable to the reader. I approach my task with no great pretensions, but yet with an experience acquired by many years' residence in the Island, and an intimate intercourse with its inhabitants. I arrived there in 1864, when Cuba was enjoying uninterrupted peace and prosperity, and my departure took place in the first year of her adversity. Having thus viewed society in the Island under the most opposite conditions, I have had various and ample opportunities of studying its institutions, its races and its government; and in availing myself of these opportunities I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to avoid those matters which are alike common to life in Spain and in Cuba.

As I write, Cuba is passing through a great crisis in her history. For this reason my experiences may prove more interesting than they might otherwise have done; nor do I think that they will be found less attractive, because it

has been my choice to deal with the subject before me from the point of view rather of an artist than of a traveller or a statistician.

Perhaps I may be allowed to add, that the matter contained in these pages will be almost entirely fresh to the reader; for, although I have included a few papers which I have from time to time contributed to *All the Year Round*, *Cassell's Magazine*, and *London Society*, I have taken care to introduce them in such a manner as not to break the continuity with which I have endeavoured to connect the various parts of my subject.

In explanation of the title chosen for this volume, I may remark that 'the Pearl of the Antilles' is one of the prettiest in that long series of eulogistic and endearing titles conferred by poets and others on the Island of Cuba, which includes 'the Queen of the Antilles,' 'the Jewel in the Spanish Crown,' 'the Promised Land,' 'the Summer Isle of Eden,' 'the Garden of the West,' and 'the Loyal and Ever-faithful Isle.'

WALTER GOODMAN.

22 LANCASTER ROAD,
WESTBOURNE PARK,
LONDON: 1873.

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THE

PEARL OF THE ANTILLES

CHAPTER I.

A CUBAN WELCOME.

Our Reception at Santiago de Cuba—Spanish Law—A Commemorative Feast—Cuban Courtesy—Coffee-House Politeness.

My companion and brother-artist, Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú, is a native of Cuba, and as he has signified his intention to visit his birthplace in the West Indies, we bid 'addio' to fair Florence, where for three years we have dwelt together and followed our profession, and, embarking in a French steamer at St. Nazaire, we set sail for the Pearl of the Antilles.

Our official reception at Santiago de Cuba is far from cordial. Before we land, the Spanish authorities meet us on board, and, after a careful inspection of our passports, present each of us with what they call a 'permit of disembarcation,' for which we have to pay sixteen reales 'fuertes.' Having, so to speak, purchased 'tickets of admission' to the Spanish colony, and having also deposited

our luggage in the 'cloak-room' of the establishment—which in this instance is represented by a custom-house—we naturally expect to be favoured with a 'bill' of tropical performances. No such bill is, however, presented to us; but as a substitute, we obtain full particulars by application, within a month after our arrival, to the chief of police. From this functionary we learn that our 'tickets of admission' are available only for one quarter's sojourn in the island, and that if we desire to remain for a longer period, an official 'season-ticket' must be procured. The authorised programme of the 'Loyal and Ever-faithful Isle' is divided into a great many Acts. One of these acts announces that 'no foreigner is allowed to reside more than three months in the island without procuring first a carta de domicilio (habitation license), which he may obtain by a petition supported by the consul of his nation.' The carta de domicilio will enable the foreigner in question to dwell unmolested in this strangely governed country for a period not exceeding five years; but he may not leave the island, neither may he remove to another town, without a pass from a Capitan de Partido, a Celador, or some such official.

The chief of police moreover tells us that, conformably with another act or article in his code, the 'applicant' must represent himself as a Catholic; that he must take the oaths of fidelity and vassalage before the governor, and that within the prescribed five years 'a foreigner must be either naturalised, or he must leave the country.'

Yet another act proclaims that during the first five years of his residence, 'the said foreigner may not carry on commerce, nor may he possess a shop, a warehouse, or

become a captain of a vessel. He may, however, have a share in a company or firm of Spaniards.'

But the strangest mandate of all is that which denies to 'any inhabitant whatsoever' the privilege of moving from one house to another 'without giving notice of such removal to the chief of police!'

Thus much for our welcome by the authorities of Cuba!

The Cubans themselves are, however, more obsequious. Long before we have anchored in the Cuban bay, the news of our arrival has reached the ears of my companion's friends, who hasten to greet us from little canoes with white awnings to ward off the rays of the scorching sun. Having landed, and satisfied the authorities, we are escorted by a number of these friends to our future residence, which we had decided should be an hotel. But my partner's friends will not hear of our lodging at a strange place, and one of their number, who claims close relationship with Nicasio, succeeds in persuading us both to become his guests. He accordingly hails his two-wheeled quitrin, and drives us to his dwelling. The rest of our friends follow on foot, and are invited by our host, Don Benigno, to partake of the sumptuous banquet which has been prepared in honour of Nicasio's return to his native country. Several ladies are present, and with these in light muslin dresses — the gentlemen in their suits of white drill — the long table with its white covering—the spacious dining-hall with its white-washed walls—and the glare of the sun which pours in from numerous windows and open doors—the scene is enlivening, to say the least of it; while a singular contrast is supplied by the sombre appearance of the slaves who serve round the condiments.

Of course my companion is lionised and made much of on this occasion, and his friend—whom everybody addresses, on account of his nationality, as 'el Caballero Ingles,' is treated with every show of attention. Being fresh from Europe we are both examined and cross-examined upon the questions of news, and to satisfy all demands requires no inconsiderable amount of oratory. Healths are drunk and responded to by some of the company, and Don Benigno's nephew, Tunicú, delivers some appropriate verses of his own composition, which he has dedicated to his kinsman Nicasio.

It is not the custom in this country for the ladies to retire after a meal, and leave their lords to their cups and conversation, but everybody remains seated until black coffee and big Havana cigars are handed, the cloth has been removed, and our host's baby—a girl ten months old attired in nature's vestments—has been placed for general inspection and approval in the centre of the festive board.

When everybody has sufficiently devoured with his or her eyes this kind of human dessert, Don Benigno's lady—Doña Mercedes—proposes to adjourn for music and dancing to the reception-room—an apartment which is little better than a continuation of the dining-hall; the boundary line between the two chambers being defined by a narrow slip of wall.

The musical entertainments begin with a performance on the piano by a sun-burnt young lady attired in a low-necked, short-sleeved dress, who accompanies another young lady who essays a patriotic song commencing:

Cuba, Cuba! mi patria querida,

in which she assures her audience, in Spanish verse, that there is no place like Cuba, and no country more fertile and picturesque than the Pearl of the Antilles. This favourite ditty is called a Melopea, or words without a melody—the words being simply 'spoken,' and closely followed on the piano by lively music.

This song and another having been disposed of, partners are selected and the Danza Criolla—a popular Cuban valse—is for the rest of the afternoon (for it is still broad daylight) performed. The guests then depart; and after a little conversation with Don Benigno and his family, Nicasio and I are conducted by a black domestic to our dormitories. Here we indulge in a siesta, and otherwise refresh ourselves till the hour of dinner.

Those of Nicasio's friends who have been foiled in their attempt to secure us for their guests, console themselves by exhibiting their hospitality in other ways. We are overwhelmed with invitations to pass the temporada, or season, at their estates in the country, and so numerous are these invitations that, were we to accept them all, two years would scarcely suffice for the fulfilment of our engagements.

During the first weeks of our residence in Santiago, the hospitality which we receive in various ways is sometimes overpowering. Wherever we may wander some unknown friend has anticipated our arrival, and secretly provided for our wants. We turn into a café for refreshments, and when we offer to pay for what we have ordered, the waiter refuses to take our coin, while he assures us that our repast has already been paid for! Subsequently we discover that the proprietors of all the restaurants and cafés in the town have been instructed

by some mysterious person or persons not to accept payment from 'Don Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú and his English companion,' but to 'put it down to the account.' Whenever we visit the theatre, the same pecuniary objections are raised; and upon one occasion, the haberdasher to whom we apply for a dozen shirts à la créole actually refuses to favour us with a bill!

These attentions are, however, short-lived, for my partner, after permitting them to exist for a reasonable length of time, publicly gives out that unless this overpowering hospitality altogether ceases, he and el Caballero Ingles will remove to a less demonstrative town. This warning takes effect, but still the tendency to 'stand treat' —which is a special weakness in Cuba—manifests itself in other ways.

I go into a café where some creoles—utter strangers to me—are grouped around one of the marble tables. If I happen to be accompanied by a lady, every man rises and salutes us. If alone, I am offered a seat and refreshments; for under no circumstances, and in no locality, does a Cuban eat and drink without first inviting his neighbours to partake of his fare. 'Usted gusta?' (Will you partake of this?) or 'Gusta usted tomar algo?' (Won't you take something?) is a Cuban's grace before meat.

These attentions are not, however, confined to feeding. They are adapted to everything that a Cuban possesses. If I admire any article or individual belonging to a Cuban —no matter whether the object of my admiration be a watch-guard—a handsome cane—a horse—a gun—a slave, or a pretty child—I am invariably assured that it is mine (Es para usted), or that it is my servant (Un servidor de

usted). When I ask a Cuban where he lives, he promptly replies: 'At your house,' in such-and-such a street, number so-and-so; and whenever such an individual favours me with a letter, I always find the document addressed: 'From your house' (Su casa).

In short, I never know what politeness means, nor what extensive West Indian possessions are at my disposal, till I live amidst the luxuries of the Pearl of the Antilles!

CHAPTER II.

DAILY LIFE IN CUBA.

A Cuban Home—My Bed-room—A Creole Breakfast—Don Benigno and his Family—A Cuban Matron—Church-going in connection with Shopping—An Evening Tertulia—A Tropical Moon.

LIKE most of his neighbours, Don Benigno keeps 'open house' in more than one way. The huge street-door of his habitation remains unclosed at all hours of the day and evening, and anyone who pleases may walk in and partake of the Don's hospitality.

Don Benigno's house is constructed after the pattern of the good, old-fashioned Cuban dwellings, with an eye to earthquake, heavy rains, and excessive heat. So careful is a creole to provide against these casualties, that his residence serves less as an abode for comfort than as a place of shelter. It has a single storey, and is roofed with Roman tiles. The walls are of lath and plaster, or mămposteria, as it is called, and the beams which support the roof are visible from the interior as they are in a barn. Some of the apartments are paved with marble, while others are paved with brick. In the centre of the spacious reception-room, or sala, is laid a small square of carpet, like a misplaced hearth-rug, on which stand twelve rocking-chairs, arranged face to face like seats in a railway carriage. They

are accompanied by a few footstools and some spittoons. The rooms are not overcrowded with furniture and ornaments, and these scarce commodities stand out in bold relief against the white-washed walls and bare flooring. The chairs and sofas are all cane-backed and cane-bottomed. Tables are not plentiful, and curtains are employed as adornments for some of the doors instead of the windows, which are also devoid of glass. An elegant gas chandelier is suspended from one of the cross-beams of the sloping roof, and a couple of unserviceable console tables, with their corresponding pier-glasses, complete the decorations of the sala.

No fire-stoves are required in any chamber except the kitchen, and the latter being situated in the patio, or court-yard, at the back of the premises, the residents in a Cuban house are never troubled with any other smoke than that which is generated by tobacco.

As for the dormitories—the one which I occupy might belong to a holy friar. There is an aspect of cell and sanctity about everything in it. The furniture is nothing to speak of, and the bed, which is called a catre, closely resembles a tressled apple-stall with a canvas tray. When not in use, the catre is shut up and whisked away into an obscure corner. When required for sleeping purposes, it is opened, and the bed having been 'made' with a couple of sheets and a pillow, it is planted in a cool place, which often happens to be the centre of the apartment.

The monotonous appearance of the white-washed walls is relieved by coloured lithograph drawings of saints and virgins, and against one of the walls is placed a table decorated like a small altar with a white lace-trimmed cloth

upon which stand some gilded candlesticks, vases containing artificial flowers, and a large wooden statuette, gorgeously painted and embellished. This image represents the patron saint, Santiago, beneath whose feet burns night and day a small oil lamp. The object for which this luminary is intended is ignored by me for many days, and meanwhile I use it, when nobody is looking, for the lighting of my cigarettes. My authority for this sacrilegious act is derived from my companion, Nicasio, who is a liberal-minded Catholic, and as I find he also performs the same ceremony in his own dormitory, my conscience is relieved. Equally mysterious are a couple of dry fonts which have in all respects the appearances of china watch-pockets. I make use of one for the accommodation of my time-piece, until I am informed that only holy water is allowed to repose within its sacred embraces.

In fine weather my slumbers at night are uninterrupted, but when it rains—and in Cuba it never rains but it pours in bucketfuls—my rest is at intervals sorely disturbed. I dream that a thousand belligerent cats are at civil war on the Roman-tiled roof above me, and that for some unknown reason I alone expiate their bloodthirsty crimes, by enduring a horrible penance, which consists in the historical torture of a slow and perpetual stream of liquid which dribbles upon my bare cranium. I awake suddenly to find that my nightmare has not been unfounded. Something damp, proceeding from the sloping roof, drops at regular intervals upon my forehead. By the light of the patron saint who watches over me I perceive that the rain has found an inlet through a gotera in the roof. A gotera is a hole in the tiles, formed during the day by the action

of the baking sun upon the mortar, which yields to its cracking influence and leaves an aperture. Rising hurriedly in the dead of night, I remove my catre to a dry corner, and at the same time place a basin beneath the spot from whence the drops of rain issue. Once more I awake under the same moistening influence. A fresh gotera has arisen over my dry place of repose. Again I shift my ground, and use an empty pail for the accommodation of the intrusive element; but fresh goteras appear wherever I pitch my catre, until, having circumnavigated all the safe coasts of my tempestuous apartment and exhausted every receptacle for water, I take up my bed and deposit it in an adjoining chamber, which happening to be unoccupied and free from goteras, allows my slumbers to remain undisturbed till morning.

Don Benigno's family take what we should call breakfast, but which they term 'tienta pié,' in their respective sleeping chambers. At six A.M. a dark domestic enters my dormitory with a cup of black coffee and a cigarette. Later, this is followed by a larger cup of milk qualified with coffee, or, if I prefer chocolate, the latter in an extraordinary thick form is brought. The beverage is accompanied by a Cuban bun or a milk roll with foreign butter: for as the native cow does not supply the material for that luxury, the butter used in Cuba is all imported in bottles like preserves.

Eleven o'clock is the hour appointed for breakfast. This is a substantial meal and appears to be breakfast, dinner, and supper rolled into one. Every item of food is served as a separate course, of which there are more than fourteen different 'fuentes,' or dishes, on the table. A plate

of eggs and sliced bananas fried in butter constitutes the first course. A second course is represented by a dish containing a combination of boiled rice and dried cod-fish, or 'bacalao,' with tomato sauce. 'Serence,' with 'congri,' is a creole dish composed of Indian corn, rice, and red beans, and forms course number three. Sambumbia, anis, and chimbombó, are native vegetables prepared in a variety of palatable ways. An olla podrida of sweet yams, pumpkins, white beans, bacon, sausage, and cabbage is another favourite dish ; and, lastly, fish, flesh, and fowl in a dozen different guises complete the bill of fare. This sumptuous repast having been washed down with Catalan claret, some West Indian fruits and solid-looking preserves are partaken of, and the indispensable cigar or cigarette and wholesome café noir are handed round.

Breakfast over, the Don's family disperse, each to his or her occupation. The children retire to their schoolroom, where the different masters (for in Cuba there are no 'outdoor' governesses) engaged for their instruction arrive at their prescribed hours, give their lessons, and depart. A master is provided for every branch of learning and for teaching every art except that of dancing, this accomplishment being naturally and easily acquired by the graceful little ladies and gentlemen themselves.

Don Benigno retreats, after breakfast, to his office, where he transacts his business affairs, which seem to consist chiefly in lolling in an easy chair with a long cigar between his lips, while he watches his escribano, or clerk, as that functionary makes up accounts and writes letters.

As for the Don's lady, Doña Mercedes, she may be described broadly as a sleeping partner, her department in

the firm being literally the sleeping department. After disposing of her housekeeping duties, which are briefly accomplished by handing the black cook a certain sum daily for marketing purposes, the worthy lady passes the rest of the day with a fan in a rocking chair, in which she sways and fans herself cool. Doña Mercedes has a youthful appearance from her neck upwards, but being somewhat corpulent, her figure scarcely corresponds with the attractions of her face. Being, however, attired in a loose linen gown which falls like a sack, ungirdled and uninterrupted, from her fair shoulders to her remarkably small shoes, the protuberances of her person escape notice, and, with her jet-black hair neatly and tastefully arranged, she may be said to represent an agreeable type of the Cuban matron.

It is often a matter for wonder with me, how Señora Mercedes and her friends contrive to keep their hair in such perfect order. Cuban ladies being gifted by nature with a wealth of hair require no artificial aid; but I am told that their heads being once 'dressed' for the day remain intact till night, a fact which I can easily credit, seeing that no creole lady assumes either bonnet, hat, or other covering for the head, when she takes her walks abroad.

But Doña Mercedes is not always such a helpless member of society as I have represented her. She is possessed of a warm, generous nature, and this quality often prompts the good lady to perform many useful acts of kindness and charity to those who are in need of her benevolence.

Between one and three in the afternoon, Don Benigno

and his family indulge in the wholesome luxury of a warm bath; for, despite the climate, a creole, when in town, rarely immerses his or her body in perfectly cold water. The water intended for bathing purposes is sometimes placed in the centre of the patio, or courtyard, where, under the powerful influence of the sun, it is soon warmed to any reasonable degree of temperature.

Ablutions over, the indispensable siesta is enjoyed by everybody, on catres or in hammocks; for the heat of mid-day is insupportable, and repose after a bath is considered salutary.

After the siesta, Doña Mercedes and her young daughters, accompanied by her adopted child—a girl of ten—do what the ladies of many other countries do late in the afternoon. They attire themselves fashionably and take a stroll in the Plaza or a drive in the Alameda, which is the Rotten Row of a Cuban town.

Whatever shopping Doña Mercedes contemplates is effected in the cool of the early morning after her devotions at the church, whither she repairs at the hour of six A.M. Church-going is a serious undertaking with the good lady. Firstly, she and her daughters must be becomingly attired, and on this occasion black lace veils are included in their toilettes. Besides prayer-books, rosaries, and fans, the devotees must be provided with small squares of carpet and toy-like chairs of papier maché inlaid with gold and pearl ornaments. These articles of furniture are conveyed to the sacred edifice by some young negress servants, for with the exception of a few wooden benches, a Cuban church offers no relief to the weary flesh.

Having entered the church, Doña Mercedes proceeds to

moisten the tips of her ungloved fingers in some holy water from a font, and after duly crossing herself, extends her hand to her daughters, who touch it and thus partake of the blessed liquid. The black attendants then spread the fragments of carpet, place the chairs, and retire to a dark corner of the building. The ceremonies begin. Doña Mercedes and her daughters follow the ecclesiastic in their miniature prayer-books, and alternately kneel and cross themselves when required to do so; gaze with a devout expression at their favourite saint, and tell their beads; take a mental note of their neighbours' dresses, fan themselves, and exchange nods of recognition with acquaintances—till a little bell from one of the side-chapels tinkles for the final ceremony of elevating the host.

Matins over, the ladies betake themselves to the principal thoroughfares, where the best shops are to be found, and when their purchases have been made they return home, calling on the way at the houses of their friends.

When there is no performance at the theatre or the promenade in the military-square, Don Benigno holds a tertulia in his balcony.

A tertulia is a reception, or social gathering, and may be held at any hour of the day; but the best time for a tertulia is the cool of the evening.

The five o'clock dinner being over and digested, Don Benigno sallies forth—cigar in mouth—upon his covered balcony, or coridor, as it is called, which in length and breadth strikingly resembles the platform of a small railway station.

'Traigan las balanzas!' drawls the Don, and in answer to his summons a couple of negroes appear with a number

of rocking-chairs, which they place—when the moon is at its brightest—in a shady corner of the verandah. Here we all seat ourselves, and await the arrival of any guest who may 'drop in' for a sociable chat and a cigar.

Don Francisco—the chief doctor of the town—is usually the first to appear. He is followed by Señor Esteban, the lawyer, Don Magin, the merchant, Don Felipe, the sugar-planter, and one or two young creoles whose avocations are doubtful. As each guest appears, everybody rises and salutes him elaborately. The visitors are all attired for the evening in black alpaca coats, white drill trousers, and waistcoats, patent leather thin-soled boots, and bran new 'bombas'—a bomba being the slang term for a tall beaver hat.

For some moments the company assembled remain speechless, and no sounds are heard in the silent evening but the swaying of the rocking-chairs and the creaking of the gentlemen's stiffly-starched trousers. Presently someone produces a neat home-made cigarette case, and before selecting a cigar or a cigarette for his own consumption offers it to all the males present, who accept of his generosity. The conversation, in which those who are not already asleep join, now becomes general. The weather, and the state of the coffee and cane crops, are all duly discussed, together with the theatre and the last ball at the Philharmonic. Politics are lightly touched upon, for two of the gentlemen present are Spaniards, and for obvious reasons a Cuban usually avoids all topics which concern the government of his country. Occasionally someone who is well-read in the day's newspaper, essays a mild discussion with somebody else who has not seen the paper

for a week; but as Cuban periodicals are under official control, they are not remarkable for their political veracity, and the well-read member of the company usually gets the worst of the argument.

Learning that my companion and I contemplate establishing a studio for the practice of our profession in the town, everybody offers us his advice, and recommends to our notice certain houses suitable for art purposes. Don Esteban, the lawyer, favours us with his legal opinion, reminding us of the law which prohibits a foreigner from setting up in business on his own account; but we assure him of our intention to 'go into partnership,' and that as one of us is a Cuban born, we have no uneasiness.

It is considered fatal to sit under the rays of a Cuban moon, so when that luminary is visible to any occupant of the balcony, his rocking-chair is immediately shifted into a shadier part. But, in doing so, extreme care is taken lest the occupant should reseat himself with his back inclined in the least manner towards his neighbour, as a Cuban would rather suffer any personal inconvenience than be discovered in this impolite posture.

No refreshment of any kind is offered by our host during the tertulia, but if one of the company feels thirsty he calls for a glass of iced water, which is accordingly brought to him by a slave, who, if necessary, qualifies the harmless beverage with 'panales,' which is a kind of cake prepared with white sugar.

Other tertulias are being held at neighbouring houses. Those who have no balconies to boast of, place their rocking-chairs in the passage or hall of their dwelling, while others, who have neither the one accommodation nor the

other, deposit their receptacles for the weary on the pavement in the street. The black domestics form a tertulia on the door-steps or squat together in dark unoccupied parts of the corridors. Their jabber is incessant and occasionally requires a gentle reminder. Sometimes one of their company essays a wild melody, accompanying his song on a primitive instrument of his own manufacture.

Throughout the evening the streets are utterly deserted, and as, moreover, they are badly illuminated with gas, the aspect on a dark night is not cheerful. But on a bright, moonlit night, such as that to which I have referred, artificial lighting is altogether dispensed with. The moon in the tropics is, for astronomical reasons, brighter than it is elsewhere; but as regards Cuba, another reason might be derived from the fact that, metaphorically speaking, a slave country and a badly governed one into the bargain, is about the darkest spot in the habitable globe. At least, in Cuba the lamp of Heaven shines with increased brilliancy, illuminating alike Spaniard, Cuban, freedman, and bondsman!

CHAPTER III.

ART-PATRONAGE IN CUBA.

Our Studio—Our Critics—Our Patrons—Still-Life.

ASSISTED by Don Benigno's nephew Tunicú, Nicasio and I in time meet with a residence suitable for art purposes.

Our habitation consists of six rooms on a single floor, with a wide balcony in front, and a spacious patio, or courtyard, at the back. We have no furniture worth mentioning; furniture in Cuba being represented by a few cane or leather-bottomed chairs, some spittoons, and a small square of carpet. But our walls are well hung with works of art in various stages of progress, which, in a great measure, compensate for the otherwise barren appearance of our apartments. Our studio is a spacious chamber on a level with the street which it overlooks. The windows occupy more than half of the wall space, are guiltless of glass, and are protected by iron bars. The accessories of our strange calling lend an interest to our domestic arrangements, and form a kind of free entertainment for the vulgar. To insure privacy, we have sometimes curtained the lower half of our enormous windows; but this contrivance has always proved ineffectual, for in the midst of

our labour, the space above the curtains has been gradually eclipsed by the appearance of certain playful blacks who have clambered to the heights by means of the accommodating rails. Gentlemen of colour have little respect for the polite arts; they look upon our sanctum as a sort of permanent peep-show, and upon us as a superior order of photographers. Primed with these delusions our Spanish Sambo comes for his carte-de-visite at all hours of the sunny day, persuaded that we undertake black physiognomies at four dollars a dozen; and when we assure him that ours is the legitimate colouring business, and that we have no connexion with Señor Collodión up the street, our swarthy patron produces a ready-made black and white miniature of himself, and commissions us to colour it in our best manner.

The press of Santiago dubs us 'followers of the divine art of Apelles,' and an inspection of our works of art is thus described in one of the local papers:

'We have lately visited those industrious gentlemen Don Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú and El Caballero Inglés Don Gualterio who, as the public are aware, have established a studio in Cuba for the practice of the divine art of Raphael and Michael Angelo. It is the duty of every art-loving person to inspect all temples of the beautiful whether they be represented by the luxurious palaces of the great or the humblest cottages on earth. Knowledge reveals itself in the dullest as well as the brighest localities, for true genius can abide anywhere.

'He who, like ourselves, has frequently traversed the Calle de Santa Rosa, must have observed that in that street stands a priceless casket, which being open leads to

the studio of the two distinguished followers of the divine art of Apelles to whom we have referred.'

After continuing to indulge in this poetical strain for another paragraph or two, the enthusiastic writer is recalled to his duties of art-showman, and proceeds to describe in glowing colours all that is contained in the 'priceless casket,' open for his inspection. He lingers lovingly over a large copy of Titian's 'Venus' which, together with other pictures and unfinished sketches, we had brought with us from Italy. He is perfectly enraptured with the charms of the painted goddess, from whom he can scarcely tear himself away even on paper, and he concludes with the remark that, 'after contemplating this life-like representation of nature, the spectator is disposed to touch the canvas to convince himself that what he beholds is merely a painted shadow of the reality!'

Sketches and portraits next occupy his attention; 'and if,' he adds, 'the visitor's curiosity is not satisfied with the representations of men and women, he can relieve his vision by regarding beasts and birds, which, although only depicted upon canvas, appear to be endowed with animation!'

In spite, however, of these and other published tributes to our genius, we find that high art, at least, does not pay in our part of the tropics. Regardless of posterity, therefore, we abandon the sublime, and offer our art services for anything that may present itself. A bonâ fide painter is a rarity in the town I am describing, so Nicasio and I are comparatively alone in the fine art field. Our patrons are numerous, but we are expected by them to be as versatile as the 'general utility' of theatrical life.

Nicasio finds a lucrative post vacant at the public 'Academy of Arts'—an institution supported by the municipality of the town. There is a great dearth of 'professors of drawing,' owing to the sudden resignation of a gentleman who previous to our arrival had been the sole representative of 'the divine art of Apelles.' The academy is a dreary apology for a school of art. The accommodation is scanty, and the 'models' provided for the scholars or 'discipulos,' as they are grandly styled, consist wholly of bad lithographic drawings. The post of professor, however, yields a fair monthly stipend, and it being offered to and accepted by my companion, contributes no inconsiderable item towards our united income.

We are overwhelmed with portrait work, but most of it is connected with defunct people, for we cannot induce our patrons to believe that a living person is a fit subject for our brush. And so it often happens that we are summoned from our homes, doctor-like, at all hours of the night, to hasten to the house of a moribund, for the purpose of making such notes as shall afterwards serve as guides for a replica of the late lamented in his habit as he lived.

One of our first applicants for this kind of patronage is Don Magin, the merchant, whose acquaintance we have made at Don Benigno's tertulia. The Don stops me in the street one day, and with a disturbed countenance tells me that his only child—a girl of three—has been lately buried. Will I, or my partner, be so good as to restore her to life on canvas? I agree to undertake the work if Don Magin will provide me with a guide in the shape of a photograph.

'I am sorry to inform you,' says the Don, 'that my poor child never sat for her photograph.'

'Then,' I remark, 'I will be satisfied with a slight but faithful sketch, or even a coloured miniature.'

'I regret that I cannot supply you with any representation of my departed daughter,' replies Don Magin.

'How then can you expect to possess a portrait of her?' I enquire.

'Easily enough,' he answers. 'It is true that I have no actual likeness of the child; but equally good guides are at your disposal. I can provide you with the little dress, the little hat, the little shoes and socks which she was accustomed to wear. I have also taken the measure of her height, and the size round her pretty waist. I can furnish you with minute particulars respecting the colour of her complexion, hair and eyes, and I will show you a lovely child who resembles my own in many ways. Besides this, my Engracia was considered to bear a strong likeness to her father. Make her appear so also in the painting; introduce the accessories which I have mentioned; take a notion or two from the girl that I will send, and I am convinced that the result will be satisfactory to both of us.'

In vain do I endeavour to show the impossibility of such an achievement; the merchant will not hear of refusal, and as an inducement for me to make only a trial, he offers me a large price, promising to double the amount if I succeed to his liking.

It is a source of infinite consolation to the distressed old gentleman—who by the way is very grey and wrinkled—when I finally agree to make a trial; but I warn him

that his anticipations about the result will never be realised.

Sanguine and happy, my strange patron departs, and in due course I receive the various articles he had specified. The pretty child serves well enough as a model for the proportions of the figure, and attired in the garb of her late lamented playmate, she enables me to devote every attention to the detail. I am also able to crown the little pink dress with an infantile face, whose hair, eyes, and complexion I colour according to instructions; and with the introduction of a landscape background and with a stray flower or two arranged in the foreground, the sum total is a pretty picture which, on that account, leaves at least a 'balance in my favour!'

The portrait (?) having been placed in its gilded frame, my patron is invited to inspect it.

For many long moments Don Magin contemplates the work without uttering a word. His countenance, which I watch with an anxious eye—as yet expresses neither approval nor the reverse.

Does this portrait on my easel remind the bereaved parent of his lost offspring?

It does! yes; there faithfully depicted are the very dress, the very little hat, and the still smaller shoes which she was wont to wear in life! The figure, complexion, colour of eyes and hair, are all hers to a shade. In short, a resemblance to his child gradually developes itself before the old gentleman's vision, till at last clasping both my hands, and with tears in his eyes, he declares that I have succeeded far beyond his best expectations.

In this instance everything terminates like the last scene

in the drama, where the aged father recognises his long lost child. But work of this nature does not always end so satisfactorily.

Happily, portraiture is not our only resource. We hold important professorships in colleges, schools, and ladies' academies, where we impart every accomplishment in which drawing-paper and pencils are used, including the art of caligraphy, missal-painting, and designing for fancy needlework.

Whenever a strolling company of Spanish players encamp for the season at the theatre, our services are required as the company's special scenic artists. The demand for scenery at the Teatro Real Cuba is, however, small; a divergence from its standard repertoire being considered as next to an infringement on public rights; so our labours rarely extend beyond an occasional property, or 'set' in the shape of a painted 'ancestor,' a practicable piece of furniture, or a bit of bank for introduction into the elegant saloon, the cottage interior, or the wood scene. Once only are our scenic services in special request for a fairy piece, which the manager has announced with 'entirely new decorations.' Though the public believe that four months have been employed in the preparations, we have barely as many days for the purpose, and during this short space we produce that gorgeous temple which is destined to form a conspicuous feature in the well-worn wood scene, and we add to the native charm of the elegant saloon and the cottage interior with suitable embellishments. Dutch metal and coloured foils, lavishly administered, cover a multitude of imperfections, and we have still the red fire and an indulgent public to fall back upon. Our efforts

are rewarded by thunders of applause on the part of the audience, and eulogistic paragraphs in the local papers.

To oblige our worthy friend Don Benigno we are, upon another occasion, induced to paint and embellish his quitrin —a two-wheeled carriage of the gig class, the component parts of which bear one to the other something of the proportions of a spider and his web ; the body of the conveyance being extremely small, the shafts inconceivably long, and the wheels of a gigantic circumference. The street-doors of most Cuban houses are constructed with a view to the admittance of such a vehicle, which, when not in use is carefully enveloped in brown holland, like a harp or a chandelier during the out-of-town season, and is deposited in the hall or passage of the threshold, and in some cases in a corner of the marble-paved reception room. The presence in our studio of Don Benigno's quitrin is therefore not very remarkable. Many weeks, however, elapse before we can get rid of this unsightly piece of furniture. Several coats of paint and varnish have to be applied, and innumerable coloured lines introduced, before it is ready to receive the more artistic touches. All devices connected with painting are by our Cuban patrons generalised under the head of 'paisaje' or landscape, and in the present instance the landscapes include two views of Don Benigno's crest together with his elaborate monogram.

A couple of mulatto art-aspirants whom we graciously receive as disciples for one hour daily, help considerably in this undertaking, and take such an especial delight in it that it is a sorrowful day for them when Saturnino—Don Benigno's black postilion—comes to wheel away their handiwork.

CHAPTER IV.

A CUBAN 'VELORIO.'

More Still-Life—A Night Wake—Mourners—Doña Dolores—A Funeral Procession—A Burial.

To be summoned from his couch at all hours of the night is not an uncommon occurrence with a medical man, but for a follower of 'the divine art of Apelles' to be thus disturbed in his slumbers is, to say the least of it, an unreasonable proceeding.

Nevertheless one of us must rise and don his clothes at three A.M.; for a black varlet has come to inform us that his 'amo,' Don Pancho Agüerro y Matos, has just died, and that his bereaved family are desirous of preserving his image on canvas. Nicasio and I, as usual, draw lots for the questionable privilege of immortalising the late lamented, and as this time I am the unfortunate winner, it behoves me to gather together the implements of our craft, attire myself in my darkest garments, and follow the sombre messenger of death to the house of mourning.

Here a 'velorio,' or night-wake, for the departed is being held. The reception room is already crowded with the defunct's relatives and dearest friends, who are seated on chairs and low stools against the walls. As soon as I

appear everybody rises in accordance with the polite custom of the country, and the chief mourners crowd around me and give expression to their grief in a variety of ways. Some clasp my neck and waist; others cling to my legs, and pointing to an adjoining chamber, they beseech me to restore the late lamented to life—on canvas.

Encompassed as I am, it is no easy matter to reach the apartment where the deceased, surrounded by long wax candles and tall silver candlesticks, lies in state.

Though my duties are confined to the portrayal of the inanimate face before me, I often pause to take mental as well as pictorial notes of the surroundings. I observe that the defunct is attired in a suit of black, which has doubtless been provided by the undertakers; for the clothes are much too wide for his wasted anatomy, and give him the appearance of a misfitted dissenting minister. I remark that the dead man's relatives and friends bear their loss bravely; for some are endeavouring to drown their sorrows in the cup that cheers, and in lively conversation. I am reminded of the popular theory that tobacco is a disinfectant, from the fact that most of the company, including the elderly ladies, are indulging in that luxury. Occasionally a tray of cigars is handed round together with coffee, chocolate, sweetmeats, and biscuits. I note that these convivialities are only interrupted when a visitor is announced. That upon these occasions the mourners are inspired to give loud expression to their grief. That the women shriek, rave, and occasionally vary their proceedings by swooning and going into hysterics. I observe that the new arrival is seized and surrounded as I had been and conducted into the chamber of death, where some of the mourners give vent to their sorrow

by clasping the clerical-looking clothes or embracing the borrowed boots. I find that among the lady mourners the most demonstrative is Doña Dolores, who is said to be the nearest surviving relative of the departed ; though from the language which she occasionally utters it is not clear to me what kind of relationship she claims.

Whenever a new mourner appears, Doña Dolores, who has been hitherto silently seated behind me, springs to her feet and in the following terms apostrophises the dead :

'Oh ! Pancho. My little dear ! (the defunct was a middle-aged gentleman). Answer me, my love. Where are you, my brother ? Ah ! it's all over with you now, Panchito. To-morrow you will be quite alone, with nobody to speak to you. Oh ! my Panchito—my love—my life—my entraños ! Pancho of my heart ; of my soul ! My brother—my son—my love—my father ; for thou hast been more than father, lover, son, and brother to me !'

After a short pause the lady breaks out afresh :

'Virgen Santísima ! Virgen de la Caridad ! Where is my poor Panchito ? What have you done with him ? Where are you, Pancho ? Answer me, my love ! Maria Santísima ; look at my poor brother all alone without the power to speak or rise ! Make him answer me ! Oh ! my dear companion—my cousin—my godfather—mi compadre —my parent—my friend ; speak ! Tell me where you are ! Come to me, my Pancho ; my Panchito. Oh ! Pancho—Pan-cho ! Pa-n-n-cho !!'

Once, in the middle of the lady's eloquence, the late Don Pancho startles everybody (myself included) by opening his mouth and drooping his head !

In order to facilitate my operations, the body had been

propped up in a sitting posture, but by some mishap the props had given way. Until the real cause of the displacement is made manifest, Doña Dolores is beside herself with joy. Her Pancho has been restored to life! Her beloved 'stepfather, spouse, and compatriot' will drive with her to the Alameda to-morrow! He shall have a cigar and a cup of coffee now, and his portrait shall not be painted!

'Go,' says the Señora to me in a tone of authority; 'we don't want you any more. Panchito will accompany me to the photographer's, and save you the trouble!'

Fortunately the lady's friends intercede at this moment; for finding that I do not obey her commands, the exasperated Señora makes a wild dash at my sketch-book; overturning in her movements my box of colours and one of the long candlesticks! Convinced, however, of the truth, the poor lady is pacified, and resumes her place behind me.

On the morning of the second day of the velorio, as I am putting the finishing touches to my sketch, certain strange ceremonies are observed.

An undertaker's man is announced, and, apparently with no other object in view than to provide becoming robes of sable for the bereaved, proceeds to take the general dimensions of everybody present. But I observe that a separate length of white tape is employed in each case, and that when a sufficient number have been thus collected, the measures are consigned to the dead man's pockets, together with the mourners' white cambric handkerchiefs.

When these and other curious ceremonials—the precise object of which I cannot for the life of me penetrate—

have been enacted, more undertakers arrive and proceed to prepare the body for decent burial. There is much lamentation when the coffin is finally borne from the house. The women shriek and swoon, grovel on the ground, and tear their hair. As for Doña Dolores—she is inconsolable, and continues to harangue the remains until her speech is inarticulate and she is carried away in a fainting condition to her chamber.

A procession, consisting of upwards of seventy mourners, follows on foot the richly-gilded and ornamented hearse. Everybody is attired in the deepest mourning, which, as fashions in Cuba go, includes a tall beaver hat adorned with broad crape, a black cloth coat and white trousers. The hired mutes, however, present a more sombre appearance, for not only are their habiliments black, but also their faces and bare hands; mutes in Cuba being represented by negroes of the darkest shade.

The funeral procession now leads on in the direction of the cathedral, where mass for the dead is to be performed. Those who do not care to enter the sacred edifice will light their cigars and cigarettes, and will employ the interval which elapses before the burial service is over, by strolling about the neighbourhood, and chatting with acquaintances at their grated windows.

Service being over, the funeral will proceed to the cemetery at St. Ana's. Arrived at the gates of the burial ground, everybody will return home without waiting for the interment, which in Cuba is performed by a couple of black sextons who, unattended by either priest, mourner, or any other person, lower the remains into the hole which has been dug for it!

CHAPTER V.

CUBAN MODELS.

Tropical Birds—The Cocos—La Grulla—Vultures—Street Criers — Water Carriers.

My companion has a weakness for bird-painting, and it pleases him to have the living originals on the premises. Therefore does our spacious court-yard contain a goodly collection of the feathered tribe, with one or two animals without feathers. A large wirework aviary is filled with fifty specimens of tropical birds with pretty plumage and names hard to pronounce. A couple of cocos—a species of stork, with clipped wings—run freely about the yard, in company with a wild owl and a grulla, a tall crane-like bird five feet high. In a tank of water are a pair of young caymanes, or crocodiles. These interesting creatures are still in their infancy, and at present measure only four feet six inches from the tips of their hard noses to the points of their flexible tails. We have done our best to tame them; but they have not yet fallen into our domestic ways. Nor does time improve their vicious natures, for at the tender age of six months they have already shown signs of insubordination. If they persist in their evil courses we must needs make a premature end of them,

which is no easy matter, for their scaly hides are already tough as leather, and the only indefensible parts about them are their small eyes and open mouths.

The Cocos, male and female, are meagre-bodied birds, with slender legs, and beaks twelve inches long. They are an inseparable couple, and wander about our patio and rooms in a restless nervous fashion, rattling their chop-stick noses into everything. Now they are diving into the mould of flower-pots for live food, which they will never swallow till it has been previously slain. One of them has espied a cockroach in a corner, and in darting towards the prey a scorpion crosses its path. The venomous reptile hugs the belligerent beak in the hope of conveying to it some of its deadly sting; but the tip of Coco's horny appendage is a long way from his tender points, and Scorpio must travel many an inch before he can make the desired impression. Meanwhile the stork has teased Scorpio's life out, and jerked his remains into that bourn whence no defunct reptile returns. Our Coco's chief delight is to play with our painting materials, where much amusement may be derived by upsetting a bottle of varnish, or by distributing our long brushes in various parts of the room.

A fund of entertainment is found in the displacement of every object not too weighty for Coco to convey. Thus, when a wineglass or a small coffee cup is missing, it will be discovered in the most unlikely spot, such as the balcony, on the roof, or maybe in our neighbour's dusthole. By Coco's sleight of *beak*, slippers part company and invite us to hunt for them, as if we were playing a certain old-fashioned game. As for the spoons, knives, and forks

—they are disseminated everywhere like seeds in a ploughed field.

Has anyone seen my inkstand?

Yes; it has caught Coco's eye, and it has consequently been caught up by his chop-stick beak. With the agility of a sprite, he had hopped upon my open writing-desk, and having duly overhauled the contents and carefully transplanted each particular sheet of paper, envelope, pen and pencil, he devotes his attention to the ink; half of which he must surely have imbibed, for his beak remains parti-coloured for many days, and the inkstand, which I discover on the first fine 'retreta,' reposing within my best beaver hat, is perfectly empty!

To their credit, be it said, the two Cocos—male and female—never for an instant part company. Where one trips, there trips the other. If Señor Coco starts off on any important enterprise, his Señora gives a croak expressive of her readiness to follow, and is after him like his own shadow. Similarly, when la Señora Coco dives into the depths of an old boot in quest of emptiness, her lord assists at the investigation.

Once only, my Lady Coco is missing; having wandered from the house, and lost herself in an adjacent field. Until her reappearance, Lord Coco is inconsolable. The pastimes of the studio and the patio have no attractions for the bereaved bird. He fasts during the day, and croaks dismally at night. But when the prodigal at last returns, Lord Coco is quite another bird, and in a moment of rapture he secretes our last tube of flake white in the water-jug!

The majestic Grulla is a better behaved bird. There is

a dignity about her walk, and a formality about her ways, which are examples to her feathered companions. At night she is as serviceable as the best watch-dog, warning all trespassers by her piercing shriek, and by a furious dash at them with her strong neck and sharp-pointed beak. Grulla abominates all new-comers, and it was long before she was reconciled to the presence of her crocodile companions. When first their objectionable society was thrust upon the huge bird, she became nearly beside herself with vexation, and made savage onslaughts on the invaders' impenetrable hides. Once Grulla was in imminent danger of losing her neck whilst taking a blind header at the enemy's beady eye; for in a moment the reptile opened his yard of jaw for the easy accommodation of the bird's three feet of throat. My lady's behaviour at table leaves nothing to be desired. At the dinner hour she strides into our apartment without bidding, and takes her allotted place. The bird's two feet six inches of legs serve her instead of a chair, and her swan-like neck enables her to take a bird's-eye view of the most distant dish. But she never ventures to help herself to anything till the meal is actually placed on the plate before her; nor does she bolt her food like a beast, but disposes of it gracefully, like the best educated biped. Jerking the article for consumption neatly into her beak, and raising her head high in the air, she waits till the comestible has gravitated naturally down her throat. The Grulla's favourite dishes are sweet bananas, boiled pumpkin, and the crumb of new bread; but she is also partial to fresh raw beefsteak whenever she can get it.

Everybody has his likes and his dislikes. Some people cannot abide a pig, and Grulla's antipathy is a big Aura.

An Aura is a vulture which sails gracefully over every Cuban town in quest of prey. The Aura is an invaluable bird in the tropics; the dead carcases of animals being by its means cleared away in a few hours. Its services are, in this respect, rated at so high a value that it is considered an illicit act to slay one of these useful scavengers of the air, and a heavy fine is imposed on the slayer.

Grulla, however, does not appreciate Aura's virtues; but whenever one of these vultures is visible from the patio, she shrieks like a maniac, flaps her large wings angrily, and turns wild pirouettes in the yard.

Besides our bird-models, the street criers, who pass our doors at all hours, are occasionally induced to lend their services to the cause of art.

Early in the morning la Lechera goes her rounds, with a large can of milk miraculously poised upon her head. The black milkmaid is attired in a single garment of cotton or coarse canvas; her feet and ankles are exposed, and her head is bound with a coloured handkerchief like a turban. We purchase daily of the Lechera a medio's worth of milk, but she grins incredulously, when one day we invite her to enter our studio. She is a slave belonging to the proprietor of a neighbouring farm, and what would 'mi-amo,' her master, say, or more probably 'do,' if he heard that his serf employed her time by sitting for her 'paisaje?'

The Almidonero next favours us with a 'call.' This gentleman traffics in starch, an article in great demand, being employed for stiffening a Cuban's white drill clothes.

The vendor of starch is a Chinese by birth, and, like other Celestials residing in Cuba, answers to the nickname of Chow-chow, from a popular theory that the word (which in the Chinese language stands for 'provisions') expresses everything in a Chinaman's vocabulary.

Chow-chow carries upon his head a wooden tray, containing a number of circular pats of starch, of the consistency and appearance of unbaked loaves.

The Panadero, or baker's man, visits us twice a day. In the cool of the early morning the little man—an Indian by birth—is extraordinarily active and full of his business, but during the heat of mid-day, when his visit is repeated, time to him seems of no importance. Our Indian baker is usually discovered sleeping a siesta on our broad balcony, and by his side lies a flat circular bread-basket as large as the wheel of a quitrin. Despite the scorching sun, he remains in this position hatless and bare-footed.

La Cascarillera frequently passes our door with her double cry of 'Las Cosi-tas!'—'La Cascar-il-la!' The negress offers for sale a kind of chalk with which the ladies of Cuba are in the habit of powdering their faces and necks. She also sells what she calls 'cositas francesas,' which consist of cakes and tarts prepared by the French creoles of Cuba. Many of the less opulent Madamas of the town employ their time by making French pastry, which their slaves afterwards dispose of in the public streets.

The Dulcera deals in 'dulces," and her cry of 'Dulce de guayaba! Dulce de almiba!' proclaims that her tray contains various kinds of West Indian preserves. The Dulcera is also a slave, and consequently derives no pecuniary benefit from the sale of her sweets, unless, by pre-

arrangement with her owner, a share in the profits has been allowed.

El Malojero is a dark young gentleman who perambulates the town on the back of a mule—or more correctly on the summit of a small mountain of long, freshly-gathered grass. This grass, or 'maloja' as it is called, together with maize, constitute a creole horse's fodder, and being packed in bundles on all sides of the beast of burthen, only the head and hoofs of the animal are visible; while el Malojero, perched several feet above its back, completes the moving picture.

La Aguadora is perhaps the most attractive of all peripatetics of the pavement. It is she who provides the inhabitants with the indispensable fluid—water. The water supply of Cuba is derived from wells attached to certain houses; but those who, like ourselves, have not this convenience on the premises, have water brought to them from the nearest pump or spring. More than one Aguadora is employed to replenish our empty vessels, and, like all popular characters in Cuba, each is favoured with a distinguishing nickname. One of our water-carriers answers to the pseudonym Cachon, another is called Tatagüita, a third Mapí, while a fourth is dubbed with the imposing title of Regina. In turn, these mulatto wenches arrive from the public font with small barrels and strangely-fashioned water-jars, and deposit their contents in our reservoir and in our 'tina.'

A tina is a filter on a gigantic scale. The exterior resembles a sentry box, and is furnished on all sides with ventilating apertures through which a current of air passes. At the top of the box or cupboard is fixed a huge basin

made of a porous stone, through which the water slowly drips, and is received thus filtered in an enormous earthen jar. A tin pot with a very long handle serves to ladle out the filtered liquid, and the rim of this vessel is fringed with sharp projections like a chevaux de frise, as a caution to the thirsty not to apply their lips to the ladle!

Our nymphs of the pump are more serviceable as models than any of their sister itinerants. They have symmetrical forms, which are partially revealed through the scantiness of their clothing. Their coffee-coloured features are, besides, regular and not devoid of expression.

My companion becomes artistically captivated with Regina, who serves as a model for an important picture, which Nicasio paints, but unfortunately does not sell, in Cuba!

Mapí, a mulatto girl of tender years, is equally serviceable, and plays many parts on canvas; while Cachon and Tatagüita, who are older and less comely, impersonate characters becoming their condition.

But alas for art patronage in Cuba! these and other fanciful productions do not meet with a purchaser in the Pearl of the Antilles.

CHAPTER VI.

CUBAN BEGGARS.

Carrapatam Bunga—The Havana Lottery—A Lady Beggar—A Beggar's Opera—Popular Characters—Charity—A Public Raffle—The 'King of the Universe.'

DESPITE the dearth of patrons for the 'legitimate' in art, my companion and I continue to occupy our leisure moments in collecting such material as may prove attractive in a more art-loving country. Suggestions for pictures and sketches are not, however, wholly derived from the street vendors I have described. The beggars of Cuba are equally worthy of places in our sketch-books.

Spain's romantic 'Beggar on horseback,' in some respects meets with a prototype in her colony.

That apparently hapless mendicant shuffling along the white, heated road of a narrow street, is a blind negro, with the imposing nickname of Carrapatam Bunga. He is attired in a clean suit of brown holland, and he wears a broad-brimmed panama. His flat, splay feet are bare, showing where one of his toes has been consumed by a nigua, a troublesome insect which introduces itself into the foot, and, if not eradicated in time, remains there to vegetate. Across his shoulders is slung a huge canvas bag for depositing comestible alms, and in his hand is a long

rustic staff. Charity with a Cuban is a leading principle of his religion, and to relieve the indigent—no matter whether the object for relief be worthy or not—is next in importance to disburdening the mind to a father confessor. Mindful of the native weakness in this respect, Carrapatam Bunga bears his sorrows from door to door, confident that his affliction and his damaged foot will command pity wheresoever he wanders. But he is impudent, and a boisterous, swaggering fellow. Hear him as he demands compassion, with his swarthy, fat face upturned to the blazing sun, and with a long cigar between his bulging lips.

'Ave' Maria! here's the poor blind man; poor fellow! Give him a medio (a threepenny-piece) somebody. Does nobody hear him, el pobrecito? Come, make haste! Don't keep the poor fellow waiting. Poor Carrapatam Bunga! He is stone blind, poor fellow, and his feet are blistered and sore. Misericordia, señores. Barajo! why don't somebody answer? Which is mi s'ñora Mercedes' house? Will somebody lead me to it? Mi s'ñora Mercedes!'

Bunga knows most of his patrons by name. Doña Mercedes appears at her iron-grated window, through the bars of which the benevolent lady offers a silver coin and a small loaf.

'Gracias, mi s'ñora; Dios se la pague su merced! (May Heaven reward your worship.) Who's got a light for the poor ciego?'

Somebody favours the ciego with a light, and Carrapatam Bunga goes on his way smoking and humming a tune, and presently harangues in another street.

Will it be believed that this wanderer has a farm in the country, with slaves in his employ, and hundreds of dollars in his exchequer? When not on beggar-beat, Bunga retires to his possessions, where he lives luxuriously.

Like some of his begging fraternity, the negro occasionally varies his mendicant trade by offering for sale lottery tickets bearing what he calls 'lucky numbers.' The Havana lottery is a great institution in Cuba, and has an extraordinary fascination for rich as well as poor. Each ticket costs seventeen dollars, and is printed in such a form as to be susceptible of division into seventeen parts, so as to suit all pockets. The prizes vary from 100 to 100,000 dollars, and there are two 'sorteos,' or draws, monthly. On each occasion 35,000 tickets are offered for sale, and out of this number 600 are prizes. He whose number happens to approach within ten paces of the 100,000 dollar, or 50,000 dollar prize, receives a gratuity of 200 dollars as a reward for being 'near the mark.'

This lottery is a source of revenue to the Spanish state in Cuba, which claims a fourth share of the products yielded by the sale of tickets. As an instance of the enormous capital sometimes derived from this source, it is said that in a certain prosperous year, 546,000 tickets brought to the Havana treasury no less than 8,736,000 dollars!

Our friend Carrapatam Bunga often invests in fragments of unsold tickets, and on one occasion he drew a prize to the value of 700 dollars, which good luck, together with his beggar savings, enabled him to purchase a farm and to hire a few labourers to work it with. Whether from habit or from love of gain, Bunga never forsook his favourite

vocation, but continued to bear his sorrows from door to door, as if they still belonged to him.

In Cuba, at least, beggars may be said to be choosers. Saturday is the day which they prefer for transacting their business, because it precedes Sunday, when the faithful attend high mass in the church, and go to confession. Except on Saturday, and on some festive occasions, it is a rare event for a beggar to be seen asking alms in the public streets.

Every Saturday morning I pay my respects to Don Benigno and his amiable señora, Doña Mercedes, who, as I have already explained, keep open house in more than one way; the huge doors of their habitation being ajar at all hours. As I sit chatting with my worthy hostess, the street door—which has direct communication with the reception room—is boldly thrown open, and a white lady, attired in well-starched muslin, and adorned with jewels, enters. I rise, in accordance with the polite custom of the country, while Don Benigno offers the visitor a rocking-chair. The conversation proceeds on subjects of general interest, in which the visitor joins. Curiously, I am never introduced to the lady in muslin; but the unusual behaviour of my host is soon accounted for. After a few minutes the stranger señora rises, and approaching Doña Mercedes, offers her hand. Doña Mercedes does not take the proffered palm, but simply places upon it a piece of silver coin of the value of a franc.

'May Heaven reward you,' says the lady-beggar, and takes her gift and her leave without another word.

Something like a Beggars' Opera may be realised whilst sitting before Don Benigno's huge window on Saturday

morning, and watching the thriftless performers as they pass. The entertainment 'opens' at the early hour of six A.M.; from that time till the Cuban breakfast-hour of eleven, we are treated with begging solos only: mendicants who stand and deliver monologues like Carrapatam Bunga or Muñekon—an equally popular beggar. Sometimes the applicant for charity announces himself with a bold bang on the door, followed by the pious ejaculation, 'Ave Maria!' The lame, or otherwise afflicted, are content with simply directing attention to their misfortunes, while the less 'favoured' attract public regard by humming a wild air, to which a gibberish libretto is attached, or by descanting upon social and political matters. The ill-paved condition of the Cuban streets, the inefficient supply of water, the bad lighting of the town at night, the total absence of anything like proper drainage, are favourite topics with these open-air orators.

Like other Cuban celebrities, a characteristic *nom de guerre* is invented for every beggar.

That brown complexioned lady with a man's straw hat on her head, and a faded cotton gown clinging to her shrunken form, is called Madama Chaleco, from a popular tradition that the old lady formerly donned a man's waistcoat or chaleco. From this cause she has become the butt of every street boy, who irritates the poor mulatto woman into frenzy by shouting her nickname in a derisive tone. The Madama has resided only a few years in Cuba; her birthplace being some neighbouring island where English and French are spoken: these languages being perfectly familiar to the old lady.

Madama Pescuezo is another foreign importation, and

her alias is founded on a long sinewy throat or pescuezo which the dame possesses.

Isabel Huesito is famous for her leanness, and hence the appellation : huesito, or skinny.

Madama Majá is said to have magic dealings with snakes or majás.

Gallito Pigméo is noted for his shortness of stature and his attributes of a chicken.

Barrigilla is pot-bellied, and El Ñato has a flatter nose than his black brethren.

Carfardóte, Taita Tomás, Macundú, Cotuntum, Carabela Zuzundá, Ña Soledad, and Raton Cojonudo, are each named after some personal peculiarity.

Sometimes whole sentences stand as nicknames for these popular characters.

Amárrame-ese-perro is applied to a beggar who, like most negroes, has a dread of dogs, and his repeated, and often causeless, cry of 'Chain me up that dog!' earns for him this imposing title.

Another equally nervous negro fears horse-flesh, and his constant ejaculation of 'Pull up! you horse-faced animal,' gains him the nickname of Jála-pa-lante-cara-de-caballo!

Our Beggars' Opera concludes with a brilliant chorus of mendicants, who, at twelve o'clock, visit their patrons in large companies. At that hour, one of Don Benigno's slaves enters with a large flat basket containing a quantity of small twopenny loaves, which the negro places upon the marble floor in front of the open door. Soon a crowd of beggars of all shades and castes, who during the last half-hour have been squatting in a row under the broad shade of the opposite houses, approach, and, without bidding, help to empty

the capacious bread-basket. Further up the street they go, picking up more crumbs at rich mansions, whose owners occasionally vary their entertainment by providing for their vagrant visitors a little 'ajiaco,' or native soup.

Cuban people are not fond of bestowing their charity through the medium of a public institution. The only place of the kind in that part of Cuba which I am describing is called the Beneficencia, or almshouse, which is under the superintendence of the Sisters of Charity. Wealthy ladies contribute largely towards the support of this establishment, but, in order to provide funds, public raffles are indispensable. Nothing succeeds in Cuba so well as something in which chance or luck, combined with amusement, is the inducement of the venture, and a raffle in aid of funds for the famished is always popular.

Doña Mercedes, the most benevolent of ladies, tells me that she and the prosperous Señoras already referred to have in project a grand bazaar for the benefit of the poor, to which everybody is expected to contribute. The articles received for the purposes of the bazaar are to be exhibited in one of the big saloons of the Governor's house, which overlooks the Plaza de Armas, and they will be raffled for during three special evenings. For weeks Doña Mercedes and her charitable sisters are busy collecting and numbering the contributions as they arrive, or twisting the paper chances into the form of cigar lights.

The military square presents an animated scene on the evenings of the raffle. Twelve tables, bearing rich cloths and silver candelabra, are distributed about the broad promenade of the plaza. Around each table are seated a score of the fairest of Cuba's daughters, elegantly attired

in evening costume, without any head-covering, and with only a scarf or shawl lightly protecting their fair shoulders. Doña Mercedes looks charming in a pink grenadine dress, and with her luxuriant black hair tastefully arranged, as a Cuban Señora alone knows how. Each lady adopts her most insinuating manner in order to dispose of her twisted tickets, the greater portion of which contain, of course, blanks, or a consolatory couplet, like a motto in a cracker, for the gratification of the unsuccessful purchaser. There is loud cheering when a prize is drawn, especially if it happen to be of importance, like the 'grand prize,' which consists of a prettily worked purse containing six golden onzas (twenty pounds sterling).

Crowds of beggars are assembled within range of the plaza, and some of them occasionally invest in a medio or peseta's worth of tickets, but as coloured people are never permitted to mix with white folk in public, their tickets are handed to them by officials appointed for that purpose. Some of these blacks are 'retired' slaves: in other words, negroes who have become free, either by devoting the savings of many years to the purchase of their liberty, or by having their freedom left them as a legacy by an indulgent master. Those who have ability and industry make the most of their precious gifts by devoting their energies to trade or to music, for which accomplishment negroes have often a natural inclination; but the infirm or the inactive —and of these there is always a majority—are reduced to penury, in which condition they fall naturally into begging ways, and prosper accordingly.

That intelligent-looking black who craves of me a peseta in order to buy a small bundle of tickets for the raffle, is a

well-known beggar. His name is Roblejo, and he owes his freedom to the publication of a book of poems written by himself. Assisted by a benevolent *littérateur*, Roblejo was enabled to put his poetic lucubrations into readable form, and the novelty taking the public fancy, subscribers were found sufficient for the purpose of printing the book, and effecting the author's emancipation.

'Holá, Don Pancho! How goes it with thee?' The individual whom I address is probably the most popular beggar in the town. His real name is Pancho Villergas, but he is commonly known as El Rey del Orbe (the King of the Universe). I have often endeavoured to secure a faithful likeness of this illustrious gentleman, but Pancho cannot be prevailed upon to sit either to an artist or to a photographer. Whenever the subject is broached by me, El Rey del Orbe grins, shakes his head knowingly, and observes, in the only English with which he is conversant:

'Oh, ye—s; vary vel, no good, good mornin'.'

Pancho is a genuine white man, but age and exposure to the sun and wind have bronzed him to a mulatto colour. He has a picturesque Saint Francis beard, and a benign, strongly marked countenance. He wears a coat purposely patched with many shaded cloths; each shade being considered by him to represent one of his numerous dominions. Being buttoned up to his neck, the coat gives him a military appearance, while it economises his linen. Upon his head is a tall beaver hat, which has seen better days, but which the Universe-King is careful to keep well brushed. Pancho is slightly crazed, and his monomania consists in the belief that he is not a beggar, but a benefactor to his country. With this notion, no persuasion will induce

him to accept a donation in the shape of coin. Those who are acquainted with Pancho's weakness, and desire to relieve his wants, must do so through the medium of stratagem. If they succeed in imposing upon El Rey del Orbe by prevailing upon him to 'borrow' food or raiment, they consider themselves amply rewarded for their act of charity. The only article which the King of the Universe will deign to accept is foolscap writing-paper, because he believes that the use to which he applies it will be beneficial to mankind in general, and to Cuba in particular. He fills his foolscap with correspondence, which he addresses to the highest authorities; the favoured recipients being His Excellency the Governor, the alcalde mayor, and members of the town council. Whenever any political or social question is raised, the King of the Universe is sure to despatch an important document bearing his opinion and advice. His majesty is usually his own letter-carrier, unless he can meet with a trustworthy messenger in the shape of a priest, an officer, or a policeman. The matter contained in these momentous memorials occupies from eighteen to twenty closely-written sheets, and is always prefaced with the imposing heading: 'Yo, el Rey' (I, the King).

Pancho's indigence and infatuation have a romantic origin. This old, shabby-looking object before me was at one time a well-to-do planter, and held a high position among merchants. One fatal day he became enamoured of a creole coquette, who cruelly jilted him. The disappointment turned his brain. People attributed his harmless insanity to eccentricity, and merchants transacted business

with him as of old, till one heartless scoundrel, taking advantage of his misfortune, swindled him out of a large sum of money, and this deed eventually led to Pancho's insolvency and utter ruin.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLACK ART IN CUBA.

A Model Mulatto—A Bewitched Watchman—Cuban Sorcery—An Enchanted Painter.

IT is not always easy to secure the services of a better class of model than our peripatetic of the pavement. Before we can induce such a person to walk into our studio, many arts, unconnected with our calling, must be employed, especially if the object of our solicitation happen to be young and fair. Having directed our professional gaze upon such a Señorita, it behoves us first to visit her family, and make friends with her parents, brothers or sisters, in order that their consent may be easily and naturally obtained. Thus, when I cast my artistic eye upon the pretty Perpetua, I have to proceed with extreme caution, lest her parents should misinterpret the nature of my demand. For Perpetua belongs to the octoroon 'species' of mulatto. Her father is a white man, and her mother is a free-born quadroon-woman, and they reside with their daughter in an humble dwelling near our studio. Don Ramon being a small tobacconist, and his wife, Doña Choncha, a laundress, we have sometimes patronised the little family, and in this manner I make the acquaintance of my future model. It is, however, far from easy to per-

suade the old lady that my admiration for her daughter is wholly confined to the picturesque; for when I broach the model-subject, Doña Çhoncha smiles incredulously, and says she will consult her friends. While she is doing so, an extraordinary revelation respecting the brown old dame is made to me by Mateo, the 'sereno' or watchman of our district.

Armed with a pike, lantern, revolver, and coil of rope for pinioning purposes, the watchman wanders about our neighbourhood, halting every quarter of an hour to blow a shrill whistle to inform the inhabitants of the time of night, and whether it is 'sereno' (fine) or 'nublado' (cloudy).

One dark night the sereno pauses before our balcony, and after assuring the somnolent, in recitative, that it is 'three-quarters past eleven and nu-bla-do!' approaches me, and in a mysterious whisper enquires whether I carry 'contradaños,' or charms against evil, about my person. Finding that I do not possess such articles, the watchman recommends me to apply without delay for a talisman or two. Raw mustard, powdered glass, and sulphur, he says, are highly effectual as charms. At that very moment Mateo's pockets are full of these safeguards, and when threatened with any danger, he has only to sprinkle around him some of the antidote against evil.

The watchman then tells me that Doña Choncha is in league with 'brujas' (witches), and that if I continue to visit at her house I shall do well to take the precautions he has suggested.

Mateo is himself a firm believer in the Black Art, and gives me some interesting particulars respecting a secret society of sorcerers, who hold certain midnight

revels in an empty saloon of a house somewhere in the town. There is a kind of freemason mystery attached to their proceedings, and none but members are in the secret. It appears, however, that their dark deeds consist chiefly in a dead-of-night dance around a defunct 'majá,' or enchanted snake, by a number of people, most of whom are attired in nature's vestments.

The watchman likewise tells me that the practice of witchcraft in Cuba is sometimes attended with serious and fatal consequences, and that crimes of the worst description are frequently the result of it. An individual unwittingly takes his neighbour's life in obedience to commands from a sanguinary sorcerer, who requires a certain weight of human blood to complete the ingredients of an enchanted preparation. 'Bring me a couple of handfuls of hair, and four ounces of blood from Fulano,' says the weird, who has been applied to for spiritual absolution, 'and I will prepare you a contradaño—a charm—that shall rid you of your evil genius, and help you out of your present difficulty.' Fulano objects to part with his 'personal' property, when the request is made to him in a friendly way; so he gets a hard knock on the head one day, when he least expects it, and if he escapes with his life he is lucky.

Such instances of witchcraft as these, the sereno says, are found only among the coloured population of Cuba, and when discovered the perpetrators of the nefarious acts are brought to justice and severely punished; but belief in necromancy exists even among the more enlightened inhabitants of Cuba, and it is far from uncommon to hear of highly respectable whites taking part in the practice of it.

Mateo then gives me his own personal experiences of the Black Art as a warning against the danger which, he says, will surely threaten me if I continue to visit the tobacconist family.

The watchman assures me that for many long weeks he had laboured under the depressing influence of a spell. The unfortunate occurrence began with an anonymous letter conveying the unwelcome information that a certain enemy of Mateo's was engaged in brewing some dreadful mischief for his especial benefit. In his professional capacity, the watchman has more than one foe in the town, and it is therefore difficult to 'spot,' and afterwards capture, the actual offender. The warning letter, however, admonishes him that so long as he does not walk in a certain locality, no harm to him can possibly accrue. It is not easy for Mateo to avoid the indicated thoroughfare, as it happens to come exactly within our watchman's beat at night; but he surmounts the obstacle at the risk of incurring his employers' displeasure, by exchanging beats with a brother watchman. The irregular act is, however, made known to the authorities, and Mateo is threatened with instant dismissal if he persists in avoiding the street in question. Fortunately, the sereno receives a second missive from the anonymous correspondent, containing the assurance that there is still hope for immediate and radical disenchantment if Mateo will only follow the writer's advice. This consists, first of all, in depositing a piece of coin under the door of his correspondent's habitation. At an early hour, the money will disappear through some unseen agency, and will afterwards be consigned to a disenchanting locality in the Cuban bay. The sereno is next enjoined

to examine the lining of his bran-new panama, which he has lately purchased to wear only on festive occasions. If all goes well, he will assuredly discover certain black pins and human hairs crossed, entwined and affixed in a peculiar fashion to the crown of his hat. The same evil omens will likewise appear at the ferule end of his gold-knobbed walking-stick. Satisfied that there is 'no deception,' the proprietor of the enchanted hat and cane wraps up those articles carefully in several folds of paper, according to instructions, and early one Sunday morning deposits the parcel in a certain hole in an undesirable field on the confines of the town.

'When I had done so,' concludes the watchman, pausing to inform the inhabitants that it is three-quarters past midnight and nu-bla-do!—'when I had done so, I walked without fear along the forbidden street, and I have walked there in safety ever since!'

The watchman enjoins me to be warned by his story, and once more advises me to provide myself with a few contradaños.

'Had I taken the same precautions,' observes Mateo, 'I should have escaped all my troubles.'

'And preserved your panama and gold-headed cane!' I add.

'Past one o'clock and seren-o!' sings the watchman as he takes his leave of me.

My interest in the tobacconist's family is considerably increased by what I have heard, and my visits are none the less frequent because of the friendly admonitions which I have received. I do not provide myself with the talismans which the sereno has recommended; but I watch the old

lady's ways more narrowly than I have before done, till I begin at last to detect something like a malignant expression in her shrunken, yellow-brown countenance.

I observe no change in her pretty daughter, though I must confess that in one way, at least, La Perpetua is more 'charming' than ever. The young girl is full of her approaching 'fiesta,' or saint's day, which annual event is to be celebrated by an afternoon ball and early supper at her humble home. The presents she expects to receive in the shape of trays of dulces and confectionary will, she assures me, exceed those of the past fiesta. Perpetua is the acknowledged belle of the 'barrio,' or district, where she resides, and she has many admirers. But unfortunately the young creole is not so white as her fair complexion would lead one to suppose. Don Ramon is undoubtedly a white man, but his wife belongs to the mulatto tribe, and Perpetua's origin is unquestionably obscure. Still Doña Choncha has great hopes that her pretty daughter will command a white alliance among her husband's friends in spite of this drawback, and it is whispered that the ambitious old dame has her eye upon more than one eligible suitor for her child's whitey-brown hand. Mateo, the watchman—ever hard on Doña Choncha—declares that it is her 'evil eye' that is being exercised in Perpetua's behalf; but I heed him not, though I am now more than ever cautious in my behaviour at the tobacconist's.

Whatever truth there may be in the watchman's assertion that I am the object of enchantment, at present I have received no practical evidence of it. When I probe Perpetua privately on the subject, I find that she has little to

tell, except that her mother is in the habit of visiting a locality in the town unknown to Perpetua and Don Ramon, and that, upon one occasion, she administered a harmless drug to her daughter, assuring her that it was a protection against cholera.

As for Don Ramon—that good-natured gentleman is altogether a disbeliever in witchcraft, and though he admits that the art is popular among a certain class in Cuba, he is of opinion that the Cuban bruja, or witch, is simply a high order of gipsy, whose chief object is pecuniary gain. The government of the country, with its accustomed inertness, has not yet established a law for the suppression of this evil; 'and so,' says the tobacconist, 'sorcery flourishes, and the brujas prosper.'

I am beginning to abandon all hope of obtaining La Perpetua for a model, when one day I receive an anonymous letter, the handwriting and diction of which seem to be the production of an uninstructed Ethiop. The writer assures me that somebody or other is at present engaged in the useful occupation of working for my complete overthrow and subjugation, and that if I require further particulars on the subject I may easily obtain them for the small consideration of a 'punctured peseta' (a coin with a 'lucky' hole in it).

When I exhibit the mysterious document to the watchman, that individual is of course highly pleased to find that I have, at last, received some evidence of the existence of such mighty people as brujas, and his advice resolves itself, as usual, into sulphur and powdered mustard. He has now not the least doubt that Doña Choncha has made application to the brujas for a spell, and he recommends

me to pay the peseta asked of me by my anonymous correspondent.

A communication from a live witch is worth all the money demanded for it, and I accordingly place the coin, as directed, in a crevice under my door. Sure enough, it disappears before daylight, and in return I obtain a second sheet of magic manuscript, which, like its predecessor, is unpleasantly greasy to the touch and offensive to the nose; but it is full of information, and concludes with an offer to effect my permanent disenchantment if I will but follow the writer's instructions. If I am disposed to do so, I must first meet the writer, or his deputy, alone in a certain unfrequented locality of the town at a late hour; arming myself with a contradaño in the shape of a media onza. Thirty-four shillings may appear a high rate for disenchantment, but the watchman assures me that the operation often costs four times that amount, and that if the unknown bruja fulfils his promise I shall have made a great bargain. As I do not value my malignant spirit at any price, I decline for the present to avail myself of this opportunity to be relieved of it.

My occupations prevent me from paying my accustomed visits at the tobacconist's for some days, but one sunny morning I venture to look in at the little establishment.

Don Ramon, I am told, is passing some weeks at his 'vega,' or tobacco farm; but his black assistants are at their wooden benches as usual, rolling tobacco leaves into cigars. I pass through the section of a shop (which has neither wall nor window in front of it) into the inner apartment, usually occupied by Doña Choncha and her daughter, and find the former engaged in sorting tobacco leaves on the

brick-floor, and the latter in swaying and fanning herself in a cane rocking-chair. Both ladies salute me respectfully, and make kind enquiries after my health. These formalities over, Doña Choncha collects together her tobacco leaves, and, without a word of explanation, adjourns to the 'patio.' For the first time, since my acquaintance with the tobacconist's family, I am left alone with the pretty Perpetua!

All is not well with her weird-looking mother, as I very shortly have reason to find. I have been scarcely ten minutes in Perpetua's agreeable society, when she is summoned by her mother to the courtyard. Upon her return I am offered some 'refresco,' made from the juicy fruit of the guanabana.

'Who mixed this drink?' I enquire, after taking a sip of it.

'La máma mixed it,' replies Perpetua.

Has the old hag added some infernal drug to the refreshment? I wonder; for there is something besides guanabana in the libation!

While I am speculating about this, lo! a strange odour is wafted into the little chamber, and presently some smoke is seen to issue from an aperture in the door.

Is the house on fire? Perpetua is again summoned by Doña Choncha; but before leaving the apartment she begs me not to be alarmed, as it is only her mother at her duties. I would willingly believe what she says, but being sufficiently familiar with the process of drying tobacco leaves, I am convinced that sulphur, hair, mustard, and heaven knows what besides, are not employed in it. The fumes of these burning substances are, however, entering the apartment, and the atmosphere is most oppressive—so

much so, that my pulse beats high, and my head begins to swim.

Without waiting another moment, I seize my walking-stick and panama hat, and escape from the enchanted chamber into the street. The hot air does not dispel the giddy feeling which had come over me, and not until I have reached my well-ventilated abode, changed my damp linen, and sponged my fevered body with 'aguardiente' and water, do I feel myself again. I am better still after having taken a refreshing siesta in my swinging hammock, in which condition I dream of black pins, burnt hair, raw mustard, and sulphur. When I awake, I examine carefully the lining of my panama, and the ferule end of my walking-stick, to satisfy myself that no burglarious bruja has taken advantage of my repose to tamper with my property. But whether it is that my stick and hat are of no great value, or that the defences of our studio are impregnable, no bruja has offered to take 'charge' of these things by labelling them with their infernal tickets.

My partner, to whom I record the events of the day, is of opinion that if all models are as difficult to secure as La Perpetua, we had better abandon our researches in this direction, and abide by our street criers and mendicants. He also suggests a little landscape-painting by way of variety, and, with this object in view, we plan certain walking expeditions into the surrounding country. What subjects for landscape pictures we meet with, and whether or not we are more successful in our quest after inanimate nature, will be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TASTE OF CUBAN PRISON-LIFE.

Two Views of the Morro Castle—The Commandant—The Town Jail—Cuban Policemen—Prisoners—A Captive Indian—Prison Fare—A Court of Justice—A Trial—A Verdict.

I DREAM that I am Silvio Pellico, that the prisoner of St. Helena is my fellow-captive, and that an apartment belonging to the Spanish Inquisition is our dormitory. Clasps of iron eat their way into our ankles and wrists; gigantic rats share our food; our favourite exercise is swinging head downwards in the air, and our chief recreation is to watch the proceedings of tame spiders.

I awake and find my bed unusually hard. My bed-clothes have vanished, and in their stead are a couple of hard benches, with my wearing apparel rolled up for a pillow. By a dim light I observe that my apartment is remarkably small, bare, damp, and dome-shaped. The window is a barred aperture in the door; is only a foot square, and looks on to the patio, or narrow passage, where unlimited wall stares me in the face. Do I still dream, or is this actually one of 'le mie prigioni'? I rub my eyes for a third time, and look about the semi-darkened vault. Somebody is snoring. I gaze in the direction whence the sound proceeds, and observe indis-

tinctly an object huddled together in a corner. So, this is no dream, after all; and that heap of sleeping humanity is not Napoleon, but my companion, Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú.

We are both shut up in one of the subterranean dungeons of the Morro Castle; not the Havana Morro, but the fortress at Santiago de Cuba, alluded to by Tom Cringle.

Why are we here?

What were we doing yesterday afternoon?

Well; we were taking a seven miles walk to the Morro Castle, the picturesque neighbourhood of which we had not yet visited, and as the grounds attached to the fortress are always open to the public, we proposed a quiet evening saunter over them.

We had a negro with us, an old and faithful vassal, who at the present moment is enjoying solitary confinement in another part of the fortress. We reached the castle grounds, where a group of Spanish 'militares' were seated. We gave them the 'Buenas tardes:' they returned our salute, and their chief, who was no less a personage than the commandant of the Morro, offered us refreshment, and permitted us to wander about the grounds. In our ramble we paused here and there to admire the picturesque 'bits' of scenery which, at every turn of a winding road, broke upon our view. By a narrow path cut in the grey rock we descended to the sea-shore, and stood before the entrance of the Cuban harbour. We watched the French packet as she steamed into port on her way to the town, and saw the gun fired which announced her arrival. The steamer was so near, that we could scan the faces of everybody on board,

and hear enthusiastic congratulations on their safe arrival after their tedious voyage. The skipper conferred with the Morro guard. What was the ship's name? Where did she hail from? Who was her captain? Where was she bound for? A needless demand, I thought, seeing that there is no water navigable beyond the town; but it was in strict conformity with Spanish regulations.

As evening advanced, we prepared to return to our temporary home, where a good dinner doubtless awaited us, with a cup of café noir to follow, and correspondence—ah! my friends never missed a mail—to open and to devour.

'Alto allá!' The ominous command to halt where we stood, still rings in my ear. A party of soldiers, with pointed muskets and fixed bayonets, ran with all speed in our direction.

'Car-amba!' Were we the object of their precipitation? We were!

They conducted us to an eminence, where stood a podgy, high-shouldered, short-necked man with a squeaky interrogative voice and gold spectacles. This was the commandant. Without explanation, that officer, in brief words, ordered us to be arrested.

The soldiers obeyed. They bandaged our eyes with handkerchiefs. They led us along hollow-sounding alleys; beneath echoing archways; down scores of stone steps; through mouldy passages. Lower yet, where a strong flavour of cooking assailed our sense of smell. A couple more downward flights, and then we paused—heard a jingling of big keys—an opening of ponderous doors—and here we were.

Here, in a subterranean vault, I know not how many

feet below sunlight. The air is close and vaporous; the domed chamber is damp and musty. They have divested us of all our portable property save a few cigarettes which we have secreted in a dark corner, and there is nothing to be had in the way of refreshment for love or money.

Yes, for money. I have bribed the sentinel, who occasionally eclipses our square of window, with all my ready cash, and he has brought us contraband cups of weak coffee. Will he treat our dark domestic as well? We try him, and find that he won't.

What's o'clock? We have no means of ascertaining this, as Phœbus, who might have suggested the time of day, is a long way out of sight. Our sentinel says it is early morning.

Hark! A sound of many footsteps; a rattling of arms and keys. Enter our military jailer with a dozen soldiers to release us from our present quarters. Our eyes are bandaged as before, and after passing up several flights of steps in another direction, our sight is restored: the scene changes, and we are discovered, like the Prince of Denmark, upon another part of the platform. Our faithful vassal is with us, looking as much like a ghost as it is possible for a negro to appear. They have tied his arms behind him with cords, and serve us in the same manner; while eight soldiers encircle us at respectful distances, and deliberately proceed to load their weapons. The negro trembles with affright, and falls on his knees. Misericordia! they are going to shoot us, he thinks; for he is ignorant of the Spanish custom of loading in the presence of the prisoner before escorting him from one jail to another.

To another? Santo Dios! Then we are prisoners still?

I think of the victim of Santa Margherita and his many prisons, and begin to wonder how many years of incarceration we shall experience.

'En marcha!' Eight 'militares' and a sergeant place us in their midst, and in this way we march to town, a distance of seven miles. Our sergeant proves to be more humane than his superior, and on the uneven road pauses to screw up cigarettes for us, and, in consideration of our helpless condition, even places them in our mouths.

It is Sunday morning, and when we reach the town all good Catholics have been to high mass, and are parading the narrow thoroughfare dressed in fashionable attire. Crowds gather around us and speculate as to the particular crime we are guilty of; and, to tell the truth, our appearance is by no means respectable. Have we shot the commandant? Undermined the Morro? Poisoned the garrison? Have we headed a negro conspiracy, or joined a gang of pirates? Friends whom we recognise on our way endeavour to interrogate us, but are interrupted by the sergeant. We halt before the governor's house; but his excellency is not yet out of bed, and may not be disturbed. So we proceed to the town jail, where everybody is stirring and where they are happy to see us, and receive us with open doors. A dozen policemen, dressed in brown-holland coats, trimmed with yellow braid and silver buttons, with panama hats, revolvers, and short Roman swords, are seated on benches at the prison entrance. Passing them, we are hurried into a whitewashed chamber, where a frowning functionary, in brown-holland and silver lace, with a panama on his head, and a long cigar in his mouth, sits at a desk scribbling something on stamped paper. He

pauses to examine and peruse a large letter which our sergeant hands him, and which contains a statement of our arrest, with full particulars of our misdeeds. The document is folded in official fashion, is written, regardless of economy, with any quantity of margin, and is terminated by a tremendous signature, accompanied by an elaborate flourish, which occupies exactly half a page. The gentleman in brown-holland casts a look of suspicion at us, and directs a couple of policemen to search us, 'registrar' us, as he calls it, which they accordingly do; but nothing that we could dispense with is found on our persons, except the grime upon our hands and faces, and a pearl button, which has strayed during the journey, and somehow found its way into my boot.

Nothing further being required of us for the present, we are conducted into the centre of the jail to an extensive court-yard, where a crowd of prisoners of all shades and castes lie basking in the sun. We are led to one of the galleries which surround the patio, our arms are untied, and we are introduced into three different chambers.

The apartment alloted to me is spacious and airy enough, and has a huge barred window that overlooks the main thoroughfare. In these respects, at least, my quarters resemble an ordinary Cuban parlour in a private house. But the only articles of furniture are a couple of hard benches and a straw mattress; and although a Cuban parlour has a barred window, a brick floor, and whitewashed walls, it has also a few cane-bottomed chairs, an elegant mirror, and a gas chandelier.

The prison in which I am confined was originally a convent, and now it is not only devoted to the use of malefac-

tors, but also accommodates mad people, whose shrieks and wild laughter I occasionally hear.

From my window I can see into the private houses opposite, where ladies are swaying and fanning themselves in 'butacas,' or rocking-chairs, while half a dozen naked white and black children play in an adjacent room. Friends passing along the street recognise me; but I may not converse with them, or the sentry below will inform, and I shall be removed to a more secluded part of the stronghold.

I am not alone. My chamber is occupied by a native Indian, whose origin is distinguishable by his lank, jet-black hair, his gipsy-like complexion, and finely-cut nostrils. He is neither tattooed, nor does he wear feathers, beads or animals' hides; but with the exception of his face and hands (which are very dirty) he has all the appearance of a civilized being.

The Indian has been himself arrested on suspicion, but his trial has been postponed for many weary months, and he is at present quite ignorant of the charge on which he may stand accused. Having no friends to intercede for him, or golden doubloons wherewith to convince the authorities of his innocence, the poor fellow is afraid things will go hard with him.

The Indian is eloquent on the subjects of slavery and Spanish rule, both of which he warmly denounces. He is careful to remind me, that although he speaks the Spanish language, and is governed by Spanish laws, he is no more a Spaniard than is an American an Englishman. There is something in common between these nationalities, he says, whereas between a Cuban and a Spaniard there is a very wide gulf!

My patriotic friend gets so excited over these and other favourite topics that, afraid of the consequences of his conversation, I propose a smoke.

'What!' he exclaims, approaching me in what seems a threatening attitude. 'Is it possible that you have any tobacco, and that you are going to smoke some here?'

Lest the Indian should be no smoker himself and dislike the odour of tobacco, I tell him that if he objects, I will postpone my harmless whiff until after captivity.

He does object; but after contemplating my scanty supply of cigarettes as I restore them to my pocket, he observes with a sigh:

'I was once an inveterate smoker!'

'Till you very wisely gave up the vice,' I add.

'No!' says he, 'I did not give it up. It was my accursed captors who withheld it from me. I have not smoked for many long months, and I would often give ten years of my life for one little cigarette!'

'Try one of mine,' I suggest, extracting the packet again which alas! contains my last four.

'Gracias; no,' he replies, 'I shall be depriving you, and you will find cigarettes scarce in these quarters!'

'If you are a true Cuban,' I observe, 'you will remember that it is next to an insult to refuse a man's tobacco. Besides, if you object to my indulging in the luxury upon the plea that the delicious perfume is unendurable in another, both of us will be deprived of the pleasure!'

'You are right,' says the Indian, 'then I will take just one.'

So saying, he accepts the little paper squib which I offer, and carefully divides the contents into two equal parts;

explaining, as he does so, how he intends to reserve one half of the tobacco for another occasion.

While thus engaged I am reminded of the awful fact that I have no means of igniting our cigarettes. When I mention this unfortunate circumstance to my companion, he smiles triumphantly, and after placing his ear to the door in melodramatic fashion, proceeds to raise a particular brick in the floor of our apartment under which at least half a dozen matches are concealed.

'These matches,' he remarks, 'have been treasured in that hole ever since I came to lodge in this jail.'

'Have you resided here long?' I inquire.

'It has appeared long to me,' he answers, 'eighteen months, more or less; but I have no record of the date.'

'You must have found the hours hang heavily on you,' I remark, 'or, maybe, you have a hobby like the political prisoners one reads of. You have a favorite flower somewhere? Or, perhaps, you are partial to spiders?'

'There are plenty of gigantic spiders here,' he replies, 'together with centipedes and scorpions; but whenever one of those reptiles crosses my path—I kill it!'

When my fellow-captive learns my nationality, his surprise and pleasure are very great.

'I like the English and Americans,' says he, 'and I would become one or the other to-morrow, if it were possible.'

'You are very kind to express so much esteem for my countrymen,' I say.

'It is not so much your countrymen,' he says, 'as your free country with its just and humane laws, which every Cuban admires and covets.'

I remind him that, under existing circumstances, I am no

better off than he is, though to be sure as a British subject, my consul, who resides in Santiago, will doubtless see me righted.

The Indian is, however, of a different opinion. He assures me that my nationality will avail me nothing if I have no interest with some of the Spanish officials. He gives me instances to prove how it is often out of the power of a consul to assist a compatriot in difficulties.

'Not long since,' says my friend, 'a marine from your country, being intoxicated, and getting mixed up in a street brawl, was arrested and locked up with a crowd of insubordinate coolies and Spanish deserters. His trial was, as usual, postponed. In the meanwhile, the jail had become overcrowded by the arrival of some wounded soldiers from San Domingo, and your countryman was shipped off with others to another prison at Manzanillo, where he was entered on the list of convicts, and has never been heard of since.'

'In this very jail,' continues the Indian, 'are a couple of American engineers, both of whom stand accused of being concerned in a negro conspiracy, and who have been locked up here for the last six months. They are ignorant of the Spanish language, have mislaid their passports, and have been denied a conference with their consul, who is, of course, unaware of their incarceration.'

I make a mental note of this last case, with a view to submit it to the proper authority as soon as I shall be able to do so.

My attention is presently arrested by a sound which reminds me of washing, for in Cuba this operation is usually performed by placing the wet linen on a flat board,

and belabouring it with a smooth stone or a heavy roller. My companion smiles when I give him my impression of the familiar sounds, and he tells me that white linen is not the object of the beating, but black limbs! An unruly slave receives his castigation at the jail when it is found inconvenient to perform the operation under his master's roof. No inquiry into the offence is made by the officers of justice; the miscreant is simply ordered twenty-five or fifty lashes, as the case may be, by his accuser, who acts also as his jury, judge, and occasionally—executioner!

Whilst listening to the unfortunate's groans and appeals for mercy, I watch the proceedings of a chain-gang of labourers, some twenty of whom have left the jail for the purpose of repairing a road in an adjacent street. They are dressed in canvas suits, numbered and lettered on the back, and wear broad-brimmed straw-hats. Each man smokes, and makes a great rattling of his chains as he assists in drawing along the heavy trucks and implements for work. A couple of armed soldiers and three or four prison-warders accompany the gang; the former to keep guard, the latter to superintend the labour. Some of the prisoners sell hats, fans, toys, and other articles of their own manufacture as they go along. One of these industrious gentlemen has entered, chains and all, into a private house opposite, and while he stands bargaining with a highly respectable white, his keeper sits, like Patience, on the door-step smoking a cigar.

I withdraw from the window to meet my jailer, who has brought—not my freedom? no; my food. It is the first meal I have tasted for many long hours, and I am prepared to relish it though it be but a banana and Catalan wine.

These are, however, the least items in the princely fare which the jailer has brought. The whitest of tablecloths is removed from the showiest of trays, and discloses a number of small tureens, in which fish, flesh, and fowl have been prepared in a variety of appetising ways. Besides these are a square cedar-box of guava preserves, a pot of boiling black coffee, a bundle of the best Ti Arriba cigars, and a packet of Astrea cigarettes; all served on the choicest china. This goodly repast cometh from La Señora Mercedes, under whose hospitable roof I have lodged and fed for many months. Doña Mercedes has heard of our captivity, and, without making any enquiry into the nature of our misdemeanour, has instantly despatched one of her black domestics with the best breakfast she can prepare.

The Indian assures me that the admittance into jail of such a collation augurs well. I have doubtless friends who are using their influence with the officials in my behalf, and, in short, he considers my speedy release a certainty.

'Usted gusta?' I invite my companion to share the good things, but he excuses himself by saying that, with his present prospects, he would rather not recall the feeling of a good meal. He, however, partakes of some of my coffee, the odour of which is far too savoury for his self-denial, and helps me with the tobacco.

Breakfast over, I take a siesta on half the furniture, and after a few hours' delicious oblivion am awakened by the jailer, who comes with the welcome news that the court is sitting, and that my presence is required.

'Imprisoned and tried on the same day!' exclaims my

Indian friend. 'Then,' says he, 'I may well wish you adieu for ever!'

A Cuban court of justice, broadly described, consists of two old men, a deal table, a bottle of ink, and a boy. One of the elders is the alcalde mayor, an awful being, invested with every kind of administrative power; the other functionary is his escribano, or legal man-of-all-work, who dispenses Spanish law upon the principle of 'French without a master.' He professes to teach prisoners their fate in one easy lesson, without the interposition of either counsel or jury. None but those immediately concerned in the case are admitted into the tribune; so that the prisoner, who is frequently the only party interested, has the court, so to speak, all to himself!

The chamber into which I am ushered on the present occasion has very much the appearance of a schoolroom during the holidays. The walls are whitewashed, and half a dozen short forms lie in disorder about the brick floor. At one end of the apartment is a yellow map of the Antilles; at the other is hung a badly painted oil portrait of her Catholic Majesty Isabella, with a soiled coat-of-arms of Castile above her, and a faded Spanish banner half concealing her royal countenance. Beneath this trophy, on a raised platform, is seated the prison magistrate, or fiscal, as he is called. Before him is a cedar-wood table, with a bottle of ink, a glass of blotting sand and a quire of stamped paper. On his right is an escribano and a couple of interpreters, whose knowledge of the English language I afterwards find to be extremely limited. On his left is seated my captive companion Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú. Everybody present, including a couple of

brown-holland policemen at the door, is smoking, which has a sociable air, and inspires me with confidence. Upon my appearance in court everybody rises; the fiscal politely offers me a cigar and a seat on the bench.

As a matter of form—for my Spanish is by no means unintelligible—I am examined through the medium of an interpreter, who makes a terrible hash of my replies. He talks of the 'foots of my friend's negro,' and the 'commandant's, officers', sergeant's relations,' by which I infer that the learned linguist has never overcome the fifth lesson of his Ollendorff. It is accordingly found necessary to conduct the rest of the inquiry in good Castilian.

A great case has been made out against us by the commandant, who represents us in his despatch as spies in league with any quantity of confederates. A pocket-book full of nefarious notes and significant scratches has been found upon me: together with a four-bladed penknife, a metallic corkscrew, a very black lead-pencil, and an ink-eraser! In the commandant's opinion the said notes are, without doubt, private observations on the mysteries of the Morro, and the scratches are nothing more nor less than topographical plans of the fortifications.

Absurd and improbable as the commandant's story may appear, it would have had great weight against us with the fiscal, and considerably protracted the period of our release, were it not for the fact that the fiscal is on intimate terms with my companion's family. This fortunate circumstance, aided by the laudable efforts of my consul, who works wonders with his excellency the governor, enables us to be set at liberty without further delay. There is, however, some difficulty in the case of our black attendant, whom

the authorities would still keep in bondage, out of compliment to stern justice; but we intercede for him, and he accompanies us from jail.

Crowds of people await outside and escort us to our studio, where dear old Don Benigno, his amiable señora and family, welcome us with joy. Wherever we go, we are lionised and loaded with congratulations and condolence. A kind of patriotic sentiment is mixed up with the public sympathy; Spanish rule being extremely distasteful to a Cuban, and any opportunity for expressing his disgust of an incompetent ruler being hailed by him with delight. All our Cuban friends—and, to say the truth, many of the Spaniards themselves—are unanimous in their disapproval of the commandant's conduct.

But I have not yet done with the commandant, as will be seen in another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

A WEST INDIAN EPIDEMIC.

A Cuban Physician and his Patient—A Nightmare—A Mystery—A Cure—By the Sad Sea Waves—A Cuban Watering-place—Lobster-hunting—Another View of the Morro Castle—What 'Dios sabe' means.

NOT many days after the events recorded in the last chapter, I am on a sick couch.

What is the nature of my infirmity? Neither I nor my companion can tell. Don Benigno, who comes to offer me his condolences, attributes the cause of my complaint to confinement in the close, vaporous dungeon of the Morro Castle, and his medical adviser, Don Francisco, who is summoned to my bed-side, confirms Don Benigno's opinion, adding, that the sudden transition from a damp atmosphere to the heat of a tropical sun may have contributed to produce my disorder.

After examining me in the usual way, the physician inquires whether my head throbs without aching; whether I am troubled with certain pains in my joints and across my loins, and whether I feel altogether as if I had been confined several weeks to my bed.

Marvelling much at the doctor's penetration, I reply that the symptoms he described exactly correspond with those which I experience. In short, Don Francisco is perfectly

acquainted with the nature of my malady. Strange to say, however, he does not venture to give it a name, and stranger still, he leads my partner into our studio, where with closed doors both converse like a couple of assassins conspiring against my life. What passes between them is not revealed to me, but after the doctor's departure, my companion assures me I have only caught a severe cold, and that if I remain 'under cover,' I shall be perfectly well in six days.

Why in six days? While pondering much over this, a strange heat oppresses me; my head throbs more than ever; my pains increase, and to add to my discomfiture, Nicasio, together with Don Benigno and our black attendant, suddenly begin to dance furiously around my 'catre,' terminating their wild gyrations by vanishing between the bars of the grated window!

My friends were doubtless afraid of the commandant of the Morro and her Majesty's British consul; for these gentlemen have entered the apartment and established themselves on either side of my catre. The commandant, claiming me for his prisoner, again attempts to carry me off to the Morro Castle, but my consul envelopes me in an enormous Union Jack, and declaring that I am a British subject, dares the Spanish officer to lay a finger on me. The commandant now draws his sword—a weapon of such monstrous length that it cannot be conveniently unsheathed without detaching the scabbard from the belt from which it depends. The consul in turn exhibits a mighty scroll of parchment, which takes as long to unroll as the officer's sabre takes to unsheath. Meanwhile I watch the combatants in agonising suspense, till the chamber becomes

suddenly dark. But, after a painful pause, daylight appears, and to my unspeakable relief I find that my formidable visitors have vanished, and that I am alone with Nicasio.

My companion smiles and tells me that I have been talking in my sleep. In other words, that I have been delirious.

Now that we are alone, I press my partner to reveal to me the true cause of my complaint; for, in spite of his previous assertion, I am more than ever convinced that the truth is being concealed from me. But Nicasio cannot be persuaded, neither does he explain why he mentioned six days as the period for my convalescence.

On the fifth day, I am considerably worse than I was before. A feeling of utter prostration accompanied by an inordinate thirst comes over me. This is followed by a sensation as of sea-sickness and overpowering lassitude. I am parched with thirst, but I have neither strength to express my want in words nor to indicate it by suitable gestures. Some refreshing draught is, however, placed to my lips, which I swallow greedily; at the same time my head is relieved by the application of 'vejicatorios,' or blisters, to the soles of my feet. More than half my medical advisers prescribe bleeding, but Don Francisco will not hear of it, and from first to last this expedient is never adopted.

My deplorable condition is not improved by a thought which suggests itself from the hue of my hands, which I perceive for the first time are saffron-coloured.

Santo Dios! Can this be the yellow fever?

The yellow fever it is; though for some mysterious reason the secret is carefully kept from me to the last.

Yes: I have the 'fiebre amarilla;' but, thank God, not

the 'vomito negro,' or black vomit, which is the worst form of the yellow fever, and in nine cases out of ten proves fatal. To-morrow my troubles will be over, provided that the night is passed tranquilly; but should there be the least indication of a relapse before daylight—well; the fact would not be recorded by me!

To say that my beloved companion never for an instant leaves my bed-side until the critical moment has passed; or that good old Don Benigno provides for my wants, and consults at least six different doctors, who come at prescribed hours to tap me on the chest, probe me in the ribs, and press my pulse; to say that Doña Mercedes proves the best and kindest of nurses and most sympathetic of friends; and that even the loquacious Tunicú, together with a host of acquaintances, makes kind enquiries after my daily progress, and offers to provide a shopful of dainties—is to say that the attentions which I receive from strangers in a foreign country are all that my dearest relatives at home could desire.

Having passed the night of the fifth day tranquilly, I awake on the morning of the memorable sixth, in a perfect state of health. All my pains have disappeared as if by magic: my head ceases to throb; my body is delightfully cool, and I am otherwise so convalescent that were it not for my doctor's strict injunctions, I should arise, dress, and betake myself to the nearest restaurant. But my West Indian physician administers to my wants in easy stages. I am allowed to sit in a rocking chair near the window with closed shutters, but I may not wash, neither may I brush my hair, nor breathe a new atmosphere for several days to come. From the mildest nourishment in the way

of sugar panales and water, I am gradually introduced to more solid food, and at least a week elapses before Don Francisco approves of Don Benigno's proposal to recruit his patient's health at the sea-side.

Now that the crisis is over, I learn that the greatest fears had been entertained for my recovery; that six out of the seven doctors, who had considered my case, had pronounced it hopeless. I was an Englishman, they said, and my countrymen had the reputation for indulging rather freely in stimulants—above all in malt liquors, and these stimulants were fatal to a constitution when attacked by yellow fever. But Don Francisco, who had carefully interrogated me on my past, which he found greatly belied his brother practitioners' conjectures, was more sanguine of the cure, and now that I am free from danger, he pronounces me 'acclimatised,' and as unlikely to experience another attack of the same epidemic as the natives of Cuba themselves. He, however, warns me of 'tercianas' or intermittent fevers which occasionally succeed yellow fever, and which are consequent on intemperate habits and undue exposure to the sun.

Accepting Don Benigno's generous invitation to pass a few weeks with him, his family and a few friends at a watering place, I take leave of Nicasio for the first time, and become Don Benigno's guest once more. Our destination is La Socapa, a small fishing village three miles distant from town. The only way to reach La Socapa (which is situated at the narrow entrance of the Cuban Bay, and faces the Morro Castle which stands on the opposite bank) is by water. We therefore hire a heavy boat, and after an hour's sail along the sinuous harbour, we are landed at La Socapa.

There are no 'apartments to let' at this favourite watering-place. When a Cuban gentleman proposes to rusticate with his family at this locality, he hires an empty house and fits it up with some furniture brought by his slaves from his residence in town. Not more than a dozen cottages are available as lodging-houses at La Socapa; the village being occupied by fishermen and their families. Don Benigno's temporary abode is isolated from the village and stands on an eminence looking seawards. It is a single-storied habitation and provides the usual accommodations of a Cuban country-house.

There are no bathing machines at La Socapa. Those who are inclined for a dip in the sea betake themselves to secluded spots on the coast, and disrobe themselves behind rocks and bushes. 'Tiburones,' or sharks, occasionally visit this neighbourhood, and as these voracious creatures have a strange partiality for human limbs, the bathers are careful not to venture beyond certain stones which have been placed for the purpose of keeping out the greedy invaders.

Sometimes we indulge in a little fishing off the banks of the harbour, or the gentlemen of our party take their sporting guns to an adjacent wood where wild pigeons, partridges, quails and guinea-fowl abound. This sport may be varied by a hunt after wild deer, small specimens of which are to be obtained in these parts. Our favourite evening amusement is lobster-hunting. For this sport, a big barge is procured, and, after having been furnished with carpets and rugs for the ladies' accommodation, we proceed to navigate the shores and creeks of the harbour. Three or four black fishermen accompany us and bear long torches of wood, by the light of which the ground beneath the shallow water

is visible. Our prey is secured by throwing a net, in the meshes of which the lobster becomes entangled; but should this prove ineffectual, a long pole forked at one end is thrust over the creature's hard back, and as he struggles to free himself from the pronged embrace, a nimble negro dives into the water and captures him alive. Great excitement prevails when a lobster comes on board, and bounds among our crew and passengers. Having brought provisions with us, we 'make a night' of this molluscular expedition, and keep up the convivialities till two or three o'clock, A.M.

One of the liveliest of our party is a young Spanish officer, whom everybody addresses as Manuel. Manuel is engaged to Don Benigno's eldest daughter, Paquita, a young lady of fourteen tropical summers, who, however, has the appearance of a señorita of sweet seventeen. I am on terms of the closest friendship with the young officer, for it was partly through his intercession with the authorities that Nicasio and I obtained our release from captivity.

One day, after attiring himself in his regimentals, Don Manuel proposes a visit to the Morro Castle, and invites me to accompany him, assuring me that under his trusty escort there will be no danger of arrest. We accordingly hire a small canoe, and after rowing across the narrow harbour, land at one of the forts of the formidable fortress.

The officer's uniform is an all-powerful pass wherever we go. It enables us to land, to pass the various sentries, who touch their caps respectfully as we approach, and finally to reach the commandant's private dwelling in the very heart of the stronghold.

El señor comandante is at home, and invites us in. He is delighted to see his young friend the captain, and

charmed to form the acquaintance of the captain's companion. He does not recognise me in the least, and satisfied of that fact, I accept his pressing invitation to lunch with himself and officers.

After coffee and cigars, our host offers to show us the secrets of his prison-house. This time my eyes are not bandaged, and I follow the commandant without military assistance.

We are shown all over the fortifications. We inspect minutely the old-fashioned twenty-four pounders; rest on the six bronze French guns (which, we are told, are quite new, and the only serviceable weapons in the fortress), and make other observations, which, if we were enemies with an inclination to storm the place from the sea, would greatly assist us in our operations. Now we are in the sleeping caves, where the hundred men who compose the garrison are lodged. Now we are descending flights of stone steps. We pass along hollow-sounding alleys and under echoing archways. Presently we arrive at the cooking department, where the atmosphere feels oppressive, and is black with innumerable flies. We come at last to the deepest part of the fortress, where 'criminals of the worst description' (so the commandant informs me) are lodged. Narrow, intricate passages lead to the different cells. Our guide points out some of the prisoners, and invites us to look in at them through their little square windows. Strange to say, he does not seem to be at all conversant with the nature of their offences. 'Dios sabe!' accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders, is invariably the commandant's reply to any query respecting a particular prisoner. 'Dios sabe' may, however, signify a great deal more than 'Heaven knows;'

and, perhaps, the commandant chooses not to explain himself.

We pause before a dungeon where it is said a Chinaman committed suicide after six days' incarceration: self-slaughter among Celestials being their favourite mode of killing care. An equally suicidal Chow-chow is confined there now; but they have bound him hand and foot, and he lies muttering in falsetto like a maniac. He would doubtless give something for a little soothing opium!

My friend the commandant assures me that the vault I am now surveying with such interest is unoccupied, and persuades me to pass on. But I linger lovingly at the little square window, and take a fond look at the interior. The theatre of my woe has changed in appearance, the company having gone. But there still remain the empty benches!

'Whom have you had within the past twelve months?' I ask.

'Dios sabe!'

It is not the commandant's business to know where his prisoners are quartered, or what becomes of them.

I apply afterwards for the same information to the captain of the garrison.

'Dios sabe!'

The staff of officers engaged in the Morro service is relieved once a month, and the captain I address has only lately taken the command.

'Dios sabe!' In the majority of cases, it is, indeed, Heaven alone who knows what becomes of unfortunates in a country where law is directed through the agency of military despotism, and where the disposal of a man's life and liberty is entrusted to the mercy of a vain and capricious commandant.

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL TACON'S JUDGMENT.

Pleasant Company—The Cigar Girl of Havana—A Tobacconist's Shop in Cuba —A Romance of Real Life—Spanish Justice abroad.

MY health being now perfectly established, I signify my intention of returning to my companion and duties in town. As my military friend, Don Manuel, must also depart—his leave of absence having expired—I accept his invitation to share the boat which is to convey him to Santiago, and bid adieu to Don Benigno and his family, who contemplate remaining at the sea-side for some days longer.

Don Manuel is excellent company, and, although an officer in the Spanish service, his views of politics are exceedingly liberal. During the homeward passage, the officer entertains me with various stories illustrative of Cuban administration. He tells me that since the Pearl of the Antilles has adorned the Spanish crown, the island of Cuba has always been governed by a captain-general, a mighty personage, invested with much the same power and authority as that of a monarch in some countries, and, like a king, could not possibly do anything that was wrong.

'The Cubans,' says he, 'have seldom had reason to be

grateful to Spain for the rulers she has appointed over them, because these have been usually selected rather on the score of influence than capacity or merit. There is, however, on record at least one captain-general whose name is held in esteem by the Cuban people, on account of the good he effected during his short reign in Havana. Captain-General Tacon established some degree of safety for the inhabitants by introducing new laws, and by severely punishing certain social offences which his predecessors had rather overlooked, if they did not themselves set the example. It is said of Tacon that, like Alfred the Great, he promised the Cubans that they should be able to cast their purses upon the public pavement, and yet find them there again after many days. Stories are current in Cuba of the general's singular mode of administering justice, which in many cases partook of an originality somewhat whimsical of its kind.'

Don Manuel gives me the most popular story of this sort—that of the cigar girl of Havana, which I will now repeat to the reader in the following form:

Miralda Estalez was remarkable alike for the beauty of her person and the excellence of her tobacco. She kept a cigar-shop in Havana, in the Calle del Comercio; a narrow street, with a footpath scarcely wider than an ordinary kerbstone. It was the veriest section of a shop, without a front of any kind; presenting, from the street side, much the same appearance as a burnt-out dwelling would exhibit, or a theatrical scene viewed by an audience. During the hot hours of the day a curtain was suspended before the shop to ward off the powerful rays of the sun, under whose influence the delicate goods within might

otherwise be prematurely dried, while the effect would be equally detrimental to their fair vendor. The easy mode of access, assisted by the narrow kerbstone, together with many attractions within the shop, tempted many passers to drop in for a chat and a cigar. There was a little counter, with little pyramidal heaps of cigarette packets and cigars, of the genuine Havana brand, distributed upon it. Affixed to a wall at the back was a glass show-case, fitted with shelves like a book-case, and laden with bundles of the precious leaves, placed like volumes side by side, and bound in bright yellow ribbon. Although Miralda was visited from morning till night by every kind of male, black and brown, as well as white, nothing was ever said against the virtue of the young tobacconist.

Like the cigars she sold, Miralda was of 'calidad superior;' and, in the same manner, age had rather improved her quality than otherwise, for it had ripened her into a charming full-grown woman of sixteen tropical summers. Some merit was due to Miralda for the respectable life she led; for, besides the temptations to which she was daily and hourly subjected, she was quite alone in the world, her parents, brothers, and sisters being dead. Miralda naturally found many admirers among her numerous customers; she, however, made no distinction with them, but had a bright smile and a kind word for all who favoured her with their praises and their patronage. One alone, perhaps, held a place nearer her heart than all others. This was Don Pedro Mantanez, a young boatman employed in the harbour near the Morro Castle. Pedro was of good white parentage, though one would not have judged so from the colour of his skin, which, from long exposure

to the sun and the weather, had turned a pale coffee colour. Pedro loved Miralda fondly, and she was by no means indifferent to the handsome Creole. But the pretty tobacconist was in no hurry to wear the matrimonial chains. The business, like herself, was far from old-established, and she thought in her capacity of a married woman the attractions of her shop would diminish by at least one-half, while her patrons would disappear in the same ratio. Miralda once made her lover a promise that she would marry him as soon as he should have won a prize in the lottery; for, with his savings, this would enable Pedro to have a share in her business as well as in her happiness. So, once a month, Pedro invested a doubloon in lottery-tickets; but, as he never succeeded in winning a prize, he failed to wed the pretty tobacconist. Still, the young boatman continued to drop anchor at the cigar-shop as often as his spare time would allow; and as the fond couple always conducted themselves with the strictest propriety, their engagement remained a secret.

Now Pedro Mantanez had a rival, and, to a certain extent, a formidable one. The Count Almante was a noble of Spanish birth, and an officer by profession. He was one of those fortunate gentlemen who, from no inherent talent or acquired ability, had been sent from the mother-country to enrich himself in her prosperous colony. Besides his wealth, which report described as ill-gotten, he gloried in the reputation of being a gay cavalier in Havana, and a great favourite with the Creole ladies. It was his boast that no girl beneath him in station had been yet known to reject any offer he might propose; and he would sometimes lay wagers with his associates that the lady whom he had

newly honoured with his admiration would, at a given time, stand entered in his book of amours as a fresh conquest. To achieve a particular object, the count would never allow anything, human or otherwise, to stand in his path; and by reason of his wealth, his nobility, and his influence with the authorities, his crimes were numerous and his punishments few, if any.

It happened that the last señorita who had taken Count Almante's fancy was Miralda Estalez. The count spent many hours and many pesetas at the pretty tobacconist's counter, where, we may be sure, he used his most persuasive language to attain his very improper purpose. Accustomed to have pretty things poured into her ears by a variety of admirers, Miralda regarded the count's addresses with indifference; and, while behaving with her wonted amiability of manner, gave him neither encouragement nor motive for pressing his suit. One evening the count lingered at the cigar-shop longer than custom allows, and, under the pretence of purchasing and smoking more cigars, remained until the neighbouring shops were closed and the streets were deserted. Alone with the girl, and insured against intruders, Count Almante ventured to disclose his unworthy passion. Amongst other things, he said:

'If you will love me and live with me, I will give you as many golden onzas as you require, and I will place at your disposal another and a better shop in the suburbs of the Cerro, where you can carry on your business as before.'

The Cerro was situated near the count's palace. Miralda said nothing in reply; but, looking the count steadily in the face, gave him the name of another shop where, she

informed him, he would obtain better cigars than those she sold.

Heedless of the significance of her remark, which he attributed to shyness, Almante rose from where he had been seated, and, approaching the girl, endeavoured to place his arm round her waist. Ever guarded against the casualties of insult, Miralda retreated a step, and at the same moment drawing a small dagger from the folds of her dress, warned the count not to touch her. Baulked in his design, Almante withdrew, assuring the girl with a smile that he did but jest; but as he left the shop he bit his lip and clenched his fist with evident disappointment.

When Pedro heard of what had happened, his indignation was great, and he resolved to take summary vengeance; but Miralda begged him not to be precipitate, as she had now no fear of further molestation from the count; and as days elapsed, and Almante had not resumed his visits, it seemed apparent that he had taken Miralda's advice, and transferred his custom elsewhere.

One evening, as Miralda was about to close her shop for the night, a party of soldiers halted before her door. The commanding officer entered, and, without a word, presented to the astonished tobacconist a warrant for her arrest. Knowing that it was useless to disobey any officer in the employ of the captain-general, Miralda signified her readiness to accompany the military escort, who, accordingly, placed her in their midst, and conducted her through the streets in the direction of the prison. But instead of halting here, the party continued their march until they had reached the confines of the city. Miralda's courage

now deserted her, and, with tears in her eyes, she appealed to the officer in command.

'Por la Virgen Santísima!' she exclaimed, 'let me know where I am being taken to.'

'You will learn when you get there. Our orders strictly forbid us to make any explanation,' was the only reply she obtained.

Miralda was not long in learning the worst. Very shortly, her escort halted before Count Almante's castle in the neighbourhood of the Cerro, and, having entered the court-yard of that building, the fair captive was conducted tremblingly into a chamber elegantly fitted up for her reception. After waiting here a few minutes in painful suspense, an inner door was thrown open, and Count Almante stood before her. The scene which then followed may be better imagined than described. We may be sure that the count used every effort in order to prevail upon his prisoner, but without success. Miralda's invariable response was a gleam of her dagger, which never left her hand from the first moment of entering the odious building. Finding that mild measures would not win the pretty tobacconist, the count, as is usual under such circumstances with persons of his nature, threatened her with violence; and he would, doubtless, have carried out his threat, if Miralda had not anticipated him by promising to relent and to become his if her persecutor would allow her one short week to reconsider her determination. Deceived by the girl's assumed manner, Almante acceded to her desire and agreed to wait. Miralda, however, felt assured that before long her lover would discover her whereabouts, and by some means effect her release. She was not disappointed.

Miralda's sudden disappearance was soon made known to Pedro Mantanez, who, confident that his beloved had fallen into the count's clutches, determined to obtain access to Almante's palace. For this purpose he assumed the dress of a monk; and, his face being unknown at the castle, he easily obtained an entry, and afterwards an interview with Miralda herself. The girl's surprise and joy at beholding her lover were unbounded. In his strong embrace, she became oblivious of her sorrows, confident that the young boatman would now conduct her speedily into a harbour of refuge. She was not mistaken. Pedro sought and obtained an audience with General Tacon. The general was, as usual, immersed in public affairs; but, being gifted with the enviable faculty of hearing, talking, and writing at the same moment, merely glanced at his applicant, and desired him to tell his story. Pedro did as he was desired, and when he had concluded, Tacon, without raising his eyes from the papers with which he appeared intently engaged, made the following inquiry:

'Is Miralda Estalez your sister?'

'No, su excelencia, she is not,' replied Pedro.

'Your wife, perhaps?' suggested the general.

'She is my betrothed!'

General Tacon motioned the young man to approach, and then directing a look to him which seemed to read him through, held up a crucifix, and bade him swear to the truth of all that he had stated. Pedro knelt, and taking the cross in both hands, kissed it, and made the oath required of him. When he had done so, the general pointed to an apartment, where he desired Pedro to wait until he was summoned. Aware of the brief and severe manner in which General

Tacon dea lt ith all social questions, Pedro Mantanez left the august presence in doubt whether his judge would decide for or against his case. His suspense was not of long duration. In an hour or so, one of the governor's guards entered, ushering in Count Almante and his captive lady. The general received the new-comers in the same manner as he had received the young boatman. In a tone of apparent indifference, he addressed the count as follows:

'If I am not mistaken, you have abused your authority by effecting the abduction of this girl?'

'I confess I have done so,' replied the count, in a tone intended to match that of his superior; 'but,' he continued, with a conciliatory smile, 'I think that the affair is of such a nature that it need not occupy the attention of your excellency.'

'Well, perhaps not,' said his judge, still busy over the documents before him.

'I simply wish to learn from you, upon your word of honour, whether any violence has been used towards the girl.'

'None whatever, upon my honour,' replied Almante, 'and I am happy in believing that none will be required!'

'Is the girl already yours, then?'

'Not at present,' said the count, with a supercilious smirk, 'but she has promised to become mine very shortly.'

'Is this true?' inquired the captain-general, for the first time raising his eyes, and turning to Miralda, who replied:

'My promise was made only with a view to save myself from threatened violence.'

'Do you say this upon your oath?'

'Upon my oath I do!'

The general now ordered Pedro Mantanez to appear, and then carefully interrogated the lovers upon their engagement. Whilst doing so, he wrote a dispatch, and handed it to one of his guards. When the latter had departed, Tacon sent a messenger in quest of a priest and a lawyer. When these arrived, the general commanded the priest to perform the ceremony of marriage between Miralda Estalez and Count Almante, and bade the lawyer prepare the necessary documents for the same purpose.

The count, who had already expressed his vexation at what promised to be an attempt to deprive him of his new favourite by allying her with the boatman, was horrified when he heard what the governor's mandate really was. His indignation was extreme, and he endeavoured to show how preposterous such an alliance would be, by reminding the general of his noble birth and honourable calling. Pedro was equally disappointed at being thus dispossessed of his betrothed, and appealed to Tacon's generosity and sense of right. Miralda remained speechless with astonishment, but with the most perfect reliance in the wisdom of her judge. Meanwhile, in spite of all remonstrances, the marriage was formally solemnised, and Miralda Estalez and Count Almante were man and wife. The unhappy bridegroom was then requested to return to his palace in the Cerro, while his bride and her late lover were desired to remain.

Upwards of an hour had passed since the count's departure, and nothing further transpired. The governor had resumed his business affairs, and appeared, as befo utterly unconscious of all present. He was however shortly interrupted by the appearance of the guard whom he had despatched with his missive.

'Is my order executed?' inquired the general, looking up for a moment only.

'Sí, mi general, it is,' replied the guard. 'Nine bullets were fired at the count as he rode round the corner of the street mentioned in your dispatch.'

Tacon then ordered that the marriage and death of Count Almante should receive all publicity, and that legal steps should be taken for the purpose of showing that the property and name of the defunct were inherited by his disconsolate widow. When the general's commands had been fulfilled, and a decent period after the count's demise had transpired, it need scarcely be added that Pedro Mantanez married the countess, with whom he lived happily ever after.

'Rather a barbarous way of administering justice,' I remark, at the conclusion of Don Manuel's story. 'In my country,' I add, 'such an act as that which General Tacon committed would be called murder.'

'It is not looked upon in that light here,' says the officer. 'You must remember that the count had been already guilty of many crimes worthy the punishment of death, and as there had been no means of bringing him to justice, justice improved the occasion which his last offence presented, and, as it were, came to him!'

CHAPTER XI.

(VERY) HIGH ART IN CUBA.

On the Ceiling—'Pintar-monos'—A Chemist's Shop *à la Polychrome*—Sculpture under Difficulties—'Nothing like Leather'—A Triumph in Triumphal Arches—Cuban Carpenters—The Captain-General of Havana.

OUR incarceration proves of professional service to us. It spreads our renown and procures us more congenial patronage than we have hitherto received. While I have been rusticating at La Socapa, my brother limner has been busily employed on work in which he takes especial delight.

A rich marquis having just returned from a visit to Europe, is inspired with the desire to decorate his new mansion, which has lately been purchased by him, in what he calls a 'tasteful' fashion. For this purpose all the decorative talent of the town is engaged. Nicasio is also applied to, and undertakes to adorn the ceiling of the long reception-room with four large oil paintings representing the seasons. The marquis has not perfected his taste for the fine arts by his visit to Europe, for he still persists in applying the vulgar term 'móno,' or monkey, to all paintings in which figures form the leading features, and of classifying everything else under the general denomination of 'paisaje.' All

artists are to him 'pintar-monos,' or painters of monkeys, and when he summons my partner to arrange about the pictures which he desires to have affixed to his ceiling, he points to the octagonal spaces which these productions are destined to fill, and observes:

'Quiero cuatro monos para tapar estos hoyos,' which is equivalent to saying: I want four daubs (monkeys) to cover over those holes with.

Nicasio accordingly makes sundry small designs for the four 'monos,' in which certain allegorical figures of ladies in scanty robes, and Cupids without any apparel, are introduced. My partner's favourite water-carriers, Regina and Mapi, together with Doña Mercedes' well-formed baby Isabelica, serve as models for Spring, Summer and Winter which when finished, are affixed to their respective 'hoyos' or holes in the ceiling. The picture of Autumn, however, remains uncompleted. The rich marquis discovers that the quality of the work far exceeds his expectations and finding also that its value has increased in proportion, he considers that this season, which happens to be the last executed, should be 'thrown in,' or in other words included in the price charged for the other three. In short, he declares that unless the 'pintar-monos' agrees to this arrangement, that he (the marquis) will get another pintar-monos to complete the series. As Nicasio objects to work gratis, our patron, true to his word, commissions a house decorator to supply the missing season, and the result may be easily imagined!

The Cuban critics are, however, sufficiently intelligent to distinguish between the good and the very bad; and thus while the local papers are unanimous in their praises of Spring, Summer and Winter, they do not hesitate to

pronounce Autumn a failure and an 'unseasonable' production.

The success which attends my companion's efforts, induces others to embark in decorative enterprises, and among our patrons for this new kind of work, is a 'botecario,' or chemist, who offers us a large amount to paint and otherwise adorn his new shop in what he calls the polychrome style.

We have the vaguest notions on that subject, but so have also the chemist and the Cuban critics. We accordingly undertake the work, and manufacture something in which the Pompeian, the Rafaelesque, the Arabesque, and the French wall-paper equally participate. In the centre of the ceiling is to be placed a large allegorical oil-painting, representing a female figure of France in the act of crowning the bust of the famous chemist Orfila. In the four angles of the ceiling are to be painted portraits of the Spanish physician the Marquis of Joca, the English chemist Faraday, the Italian anatomist Paganucci, and the French chemist Velpeau. It takes exactly seven months to carry out our design; in the execution whereof we are assisted by the native talent already alluded to. Among our staff of operators are a couple of black white-washers for the broad work, a master carpenter with his apprentice for the carvings, and an indefatigable Chow-chow, or Chinaman, whom we employ extensively for the elaborate pattern work. Our mulatto pupils also help us in many ways.

The chief objects of attraction in this great undertaking are without a doubt a pair of life-sized figures of two celebrated French chemists, named Parmentier and Vauquelin, destined to stand in a conspicuous part of the shop. As there are no sculptors in our town, it devolves as

usual upon the 'followers of the divine art of Apelles' to try their hands at the art of Phidias. Confident of success, the chemist provides us with a couple of plaster busts representing the French celebrities in question, and bids us do our best. The fragments of drapery exhibited on these gentlemen enable us to decide on the kind of costume which our figures should wear; the one being indicative of a robe somewhat clerical, and the other evincing without a doubt that the original belonged to a period when knee-breeches and top-boots were much in vogue. The resources of Cuba for the making of statues are limited, so the material we employ is slight. We construct our figures upon the principle on which paper masks are made, and by painting them afterwards in imitation of marble, a very solid appearance may be obtained. I will not describe the many difficulties which we encounter at every stage of this process; but when the hollow effigies are complete and we have fixed them to their painted wooden plinths, we are vain enough to believe that we have produced as goodly a pair of sham statues as you would see if you travelled from one extremity of Cuba to the other.

It is the night which precedes the opening of the chemist's shop, and we have retired to our dormitories after having given a final coat of marble colour to our pasteboard productions. I am about to tumble into my hammock, when my progress is arrested by a strange sound which seems to emanate from an adjoining chamber. I re-ignite my extinguished lamp, and take a peep into the studio. Something is certainly moving in that apartment. I summon my companion, who joins me, and we enter our sanctum.

'Misericordia! One of the statues is alive,' I exclaim, horrified at what appears to me a second edition of Frankenstein.

'Eppur si muove!' ejaculates Nicasio, quoting from another authority.

Monsieur Parmentier—he of the periwig and top-boots—is sinking perceptibly, though gradually. We advance to save him, but alas! too late; the illustrious Frenchman is already on his bended boots. The wooden props which supported his hollow legs have given way, and his top boots are now a shapeless mass. We pause for a moment to contemplate the wreck before us, and immediately set about repairing the damage.

But how? A brilliant idea suggests itself.

In a corner of the studio stand the leather originals which have served us as models for the extremities of the injured statue. These same boots belong to an obliging shoemaker who has only lent them to us. But what of that? The case is urgent, and this is no time to run after our friend and bargain with him for his property.

To fill the boots with plaster of Paris; to humour them, while the plaster is yet moist, into something which resembles the human leg divine, is the work of a few moments. To fix them firmly to the wooden plinth, and prop over them the incomplete torso by means of laths cunningly concealed, occupies little more than an hour and a half. A coat of thick white paint administered below, completes the operation, and Parmentier is erect again, and apparently none the worse for his disaster. One more layer of paint early next morning, and the statue is faultless, and ready for being borne triumphantly from our

studio to its destination. There it is placed in its niche, and no one suspects the mishap. Evening approaches, and with it come crowds of Cuban dilettanti and others who have been invited. The ceremony of blessing the new undertaking is solemnised according to custom by a priest, and an assistant who sprinkles holy-water from a small hand-broom upon everything and everybody, while a short prayer in Latin is chanted. Then the guests proceed to examine the various embellishments of this singular shop, pausing to refresh themselves from the sumptuous repast which the chemist has provided for his guests and patrons in an adjoining chamber.

The statues form a subject for wonder with everybody, and no one will believe that they are constructed of other than solid material. Even the credulous, who are permitted to tap one of Parmentier's boots as a convincing test, cannot help sharing the popular delusion.

But our friend the shoemaker is not so easily deceived. From certain signs, known only to himself, he recognises in the statue's painted extremities his own appropriated goods. We swear him to secrecy, and offer to pay him liberally for the loss he has sustained; and it pleases him to discover that in the pursuit of the fine arts—and as regards statue-making in the West Indies we echo the sentiment—there is nothing like leather!

The chemist's shop is scarcely disposed of, when application is again made to us for another important undertaking.

The Captain-general of Havana has signified his intention to honour our town with a visit, and preparations for his reception must accordingly be made. The good

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people of Cuba have not a superabundance of affection for their distinguished chief: possibly because captains-general are not as a rule all that their subjects might desire. But a visit from his excellency is such an unusual event (for our captain-general is rarely absent from his comfortable palace in the Havana) that the inhabitants of Santiago determine to make at least holiday—if not to profit—out of the occasion. The merchants and shop-keepers are especially interested in exhibiting their loyalty; for in this manner they hope to obtain many mercantile concessions. Certain little nefarious transactions connected with the custom-house may through the captain-general's benevolence be forgiven or ignored, while other matters, connected with the landing of negroes, may also pass censorship. A number of petitions for various local favours have been also prepared, and in short the inhabitants hope to derive many advantages from the visit of their colonial King.

The merchants' contribution towards the festivities will be a public ball in the theatre, and a grand triumphal arch, which they propose to erect in the principal thoroughfare. But a triumphal arch, such as these gentlemen contemplate, is not so easily obtained in Cuba. Los Señores Bosch Brothers—who are appointed to direct this work—have, however, no difficulty in providing architects qualified to undertake the fabrication required. The followers of the divine art of Apelles no doubt 'deal' in triumphal arches, and the 'job' is accordingly offered to them.

Our experience in the manufacture of triumphal arches is not wide, but our patrons are so very pressing, and their

terms are, moreover, so very liberal, that we are finally induced to embark in the enterprise.

A plan of the proposed structure having been drawn and submitted for approval to Don Elijio, who is the head of the firm of Bosch Brothers, our operations begin. The order of architecture which we adopt partakes of the Norman and the early Gothic, with a 'dash,' so to speak, of the Byzantine, to give it a cheerful aspect. It might remind the learned in these matters of York Minster, Temple Bar, or a court in the Crystal Palace; but the Señores Bosch Brothers—whose acquaintance with architectural master-pieces is confined to the governor's palace of lath and plaster, and the white-washed cathedral—are easily satisfied.

Our labours are conducted in the extensive store-room of Messrs. Bosch Brothers, which, in order to facilitate our operations, is cleared of its cumbersome contents. The arch is destined to stand in that part of the street which divides the warehouse from the market-place. The latter stands at an elevation of more than forty feet above the pavement, and is reached by a wide flight of stone steps. It forms part of our plan to connect our frail edifice with the market wall, and match its local stone colour.

We have exactly a month for the completion of our task, and we make the most of our time. Cart-loads of white wood, in planks and logs, arrive at all hours of the day, together with yards upon yards of coarse canvas, pounds of nails, colours in powder, huge earthenware pots and size. In short, our requirements are akin to those of a scene painter.

Thrifty Don Elijio has periodical moments of panic; for

it seems to him that our demands for wood, paint, canvas and nails, are exorbitant, and more than once he predicts the ruin of his speculation. The merchant begins to regret that he did not persuade us to 'contract' for the whole expense, instead of receiving a separate remuneration for our time and labour. Sometimes he will endeavour to show that there is something defective in our agreement.

'Look here!' says he. 'You are artists, and if I come to you to have my portrait painted, I suppose you will not expect me to pay for your colours and canvas?'

We have neither time nor ability to argue the point; but the man of many bargains is easily convinced, when we hint about relinquishing our labours!

Foiled in his effort to reduce expenses, the merchant tries to economise in another way, by questioning the propriety of adopting certain little contrivances which he cannot for the life of him follow in the original plan.

'What are those hugh firework sort of wheels for?' he asks one day. 'I don't see them in the drawing, and therefore consider them unnecessary.'

'Those wheels,' we explain, 'which you are pleased to compare with fireworks, constitute the skeleton, or framework, of four turrets, which, after having been concealed behind canvas, painted stone-colour, and relieved with imitation port-holes, will be suspended from the uppermost angles of the arch.'

'And where is that broad octagonal chimney to be placed?' inquires the merchant.

'That "chimney,"' we reply, 'represents a Gothic temple,

and is destined to stand over the centre of the arch upon a graduated pedestal.'

The wood-work of our fabric is put together by a number of black and brown carpenters; but we have to superintend every part, as these gentlemen have no notion whatever of architectural devices, and our eloquence fails to convey to their intelligence our multifarious needs.

The readiest of our assistants is a young mulatto, nicknamed El Tuerto by reason of a strong cast in his left eye. He is far more industrious than his fellow-workmen, most of whom have a weakness for aguardiente, and are consequently often in what my medical friend Doctor Acéro terms, 'a state of vulgar excitement.' El Tuerto easily grasps at an idea, and sometimes offers a useful suggestion or two. It is he who recommends to our notice a friend of his who, he thinks, might be serviceable in the painting department. The friend in question is a feeble old negro, occasionally afflicted with delirium tremens. We try him with the 'line' work, which consists in squaring off the imitation stones of the painted masonry: but, his hand being too unsteady for this, we employ him for the graining, which accords better with his peculiar 'touch,' as the process requires certain nervous jerks of the wrist.

At length the day arrives when the stones of the street must be uprooted, the tall scaffolding planted, and the innumerable pieces of painted canvas which form the external covering of the arch, united and raised to their respective places. When the fabric is complete, the local papers, which have already noticed its progress from time to time, thus describe its beauties:

'The triumphal arch erected in the Calle de la Marina by the merchants and planters of Santiago, is the combined work of those illustrious followers of the divine art of Apelles, Don Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú and El Caballero Inglés Don Gualterio. This imposing structure measures forty-five feet in height, thirty feet in breadth, and nine feet in depth. It is supposed to represent part of an old feudal castle with its turrets, port-holes and belfry, and is painted in imitation of granite stone, which forms a striking contrast with the intense blue of our tropical sky, against which the arch stands in bold relief.

'On either side of the façade are painted colossal figures representing Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Justice. Above these allegories are placed the escutcheons of our illustrious Captain-general, together with the coats-of-arms belonging to Spain and to Santiago de Cuba. Near the centre of the arch are recorded in bold and fanciful letters the various triumphs of our distinguished general; such as the blockade of Zaragoza in 1843, the glorious campaign in Portugal, 1847, the Italian expedition, etc.

'Upon each of the four turrets are planted tall flag-staffs, from which coloured streamers gracefully depend, and over the centre of the arch, upon the summit of the pretty campanilla, waves majestically in the breeze the imposing banner of Spanish commerce.

'From the palms of the arch is suspended a garland of natural evergreens, in which is artistically entwined a broad red and orange-coloured ribbon bearing the following inscription:

'"To His Excellency the Captain-General: from the Merchants and Planters of Santiago de Cuba."'

His excellency arrives in due course, and is so thoroughly gratified with his reception in Santiago, that upon his return to Havana he reports favourably to his government upon the progress and prosperity of our part of the 'Ever-faithful Isle.'

CHAPTER XII.

A CORRESPONDENT IN THE WEST INDIES.

American News-agents and their Work—Local Information—The 'Glorious Campaign' of Santo Domingo—'El Cañon de Montecristo'—Wounded Soldiers—Still Life again !—A Visit from the Spanish Fleet—Escape from Jail.

'HERE is something in your line,' remarks Nicasio one day, handing me a letter which has just been brought to our studio by a black messenger.

The letter is from Don Elijio, of the firm of Bosch Brothers, and states that the Havana agent of the *New York Trigger* has commissioned the merchants to find him a person who is both qualified and willing to undertake the post of newspaper correspondent. The individual must have a thorough knowledge of the Spanish and English languages ; he must be conversant with the ways of Cuba and be in a position to collect facts connected with the social and political life of the town in which he resides. His duties will also be to receive communications from the agents of the American newspaper in question, who are dispersed all over the West Indies, and after selecting the chief points of interest contained in these communications, he must dispatch them, in the form of telegrams and newsletters, to head-quarters in Havana. For these services a

liberal monthly salary is offered, and Don Elijio presuming that journalism is in some way related to 'the divine art of Apelles,' and having moreover every confidence in our versatile powers, offers us the engagement.

All is fish that comes to our net in Cuban waters, so as art 'trade' is looking rather 'dull,' owing to recent monetary panics in the town, Nicasio advises me to give the correspondent business a trial. I accordingly accept the proffered post, and after some preliminary arrangements with Messrs. Bosch Brothers, commence operations.

In my capacity of correspondent to the *New York Trigger*, I am required to follow certain directions with which the central agent in Havana supplies me. First, a telegram, containing the pith of the news I have to impart, must be dispatched with all speed to head-quarters in Havana, where it will be again transmitted to New York by means of the submarine cable between Havana and Florida. The telegram must be shortly followed by a carefully composed news-letter, of which press-copies must be taken and dispatched by two or three different routes. I am enjoined to remember that 'the first thing correspondents should acquire is news, and the second is how to give it; not forgetting that they are writing for a newspaper and not for a magazine.'

'The correspondence,' says the directions, 'should embrace all that bears upon the political, administrative, agricultural, mining, commercial and other topics of the day, including new enterprises, new railroads and telegraphs. It is important to obtain the particulars of any measure contemplated by the Spanish Government, but these must be obtained from *reliable* sources and *before* they have been

made public. Local subjects should be eschewed, except they bear on politics, or on anything transcendental and of a "sensational" character likely to interest the American public.'

The shipping list, containing the names of vessels and their dates of arrival and departure to and from any port, together with a brief account of any disaster at sea, forms an important item in the agent's duties. But above all promptness in the dispatch of news 'bearing a sensational character,' is strongly recommended.

To be *in advance* of its contemporaries—or at least never behind them—is the end and aim of the American paper which I serve, and to attain these desirable objects, every artifice must be employed and 'no expense spared.'

The agents established in the neighbouring islands and in South America are mostly natives of the towns where they reside and, like myself, have other occupations besides those which concern a newspaper. Señor Pillo, who supplies most of my South American news, is a clerk in a sugar warehouse. Mons. Blagué of Hayti is a cigar manufacturer in that colony, while Meinheer Vandercram is a sorter in the Post-office at St. Thomas. Then there is Mr. Archibald Cannie, in the adjacent island of Jamaica, who furnishes me with abundant news from Colon, Panama, St. Domingo, Barbadoes, Trinidad and a family of sister isles. These persons sometimes give me a world of trouble with their conflicting statements and confused information, and their sins are invariably visited upon my shoulders. Mr. Cannie of Jamaica is, however, the best of my correspondents, though he is occasionally afflicted with what my employer in Havana styles 'Magazine on the brain;' which

means that Mr. Cannie is too prolific, and adopts a diffuse, rambling mode of imparting facts in preference to those much desired virtues brevity and conciseness.

My residence—on an elevated part of the town commanding a view of the Cuban Bay—enables me to sight vessels before they have anchored in the harbour.

Every ship is announced to the authorities by means of signals. A signal post is planted on the Morro Castle overlooking the sea. Another is situated inland between the fortress and the town, while a third stands within telescope range of the Custom-house. It is this last which, on certain days, engrosses my attention ; for by it I am made aware of the approach of vessels long before they are visible in the bay. The signal post is shaped like a cross, to the points of which are hoisted black and white balls and coloured banners, by means of which the description of the craft, together with her name and country, is made known.

In my employ is a young negro who, whenever a vessel is expected, squats in the shade of our broad balcony, and with a telescope placed to his left eye takes observation of the signal post. As soon as anything is hoisted, the black sentinel reports the same to me after the following fashion :

'Miamo, alerte ! The signal is speaking.'

'What does it say, negrito ?' I inquire from within.

'White ball in the centre, miamo.'

By this I know that a steamer is in sight. After a pause my negrito informs me that the signal has added something to its last observation.

'What does it say ?'

'Blue streamer to windward under white ball.'

From these appearances I gather where the steamer hails

from and what is her nationality. In the same manner I derive other information respecting the coming craft, all of which I hasten to note down.

The sound of a gun warns me that the vessel has already entered the harbour, six miles distant. Anon she appears cautiously steering through the narrow winding bay; gradually disclosing first her rig, then her colours, and lastly her name. Long before the ship has dropped anchor, I have reached the quay, where I embark in a small canoe to meet the moving steamer. Arrived within hailing distance of the vessel, I shout to the purser, the supercargo, or to anybody else who may have brought news or correspondence for me. If I succeeded in obtaining some, I land again, and before the anchorage gun is fired, I am on my way to the telegraph office. Here—with my dispatches before me—I compose and forward a brief summary of news from the port whence the steamer hails, and if there is nothing to interrupt the line of communication with America, the *New York Trigger* will contain my telegrams in its second edition of the following day.

I have many difficulties to contend with in my quest of local matter in Santiago. Some of my Cuban friends help me in my researches, and I also pick up fragments of 'intelligence' in the cafés, the public promenade, the warehouses, and the newspaper offices. Occasionally I hold secret audience with an intelligent native, who volunteers some extraordinary information on a local subject which is of no interest whatever to anybody except my informant. Sometimes the applicant is persuaded that I have indirect influence with the American Congress, and presses me to

communicate his grievance to the authorities in Washington. I dare not close my ear against such applicants, for in the mass of valueless dross which I receive, I sometimes discover a rough diamond which, after due cutting and polishing, I dispose of to the *New York Trigger*.

For instance: an aged negro of my acquaintance comes to me one day, with the astounding information that he, and a number of equally decrepit and unserviceable slaves, have been killed and buried by his master. In other words, the owners of these useless helots have hoodwinked the slave emancipators by representing their decrepit human property as defunct, while they substitute fresh importations in their places. Subsequently I learn that a landing of blacks has been lately effected near Guantánamo, and, upon a closer investigation, I gather the curious particulars, which are these:—

The Capitan de Partido, or Major of the district, where the nefarious transaction took place, was naïvely requested by the parties interested in the landing to absent himself from the locality during a certain week; for which simple act he would receive four or five thousand dollars. During his absence, the landing of slaves is of course effected; and when the authorities hear of the transaction, and reprimand el Capitan de Partido for his want of vigilance, the latter exonerates himself by explaining how he was unfortunately absent from his post within the very date of the embarkation.

This is a topic of passing interest to the American people, while it affords the *Trigger* a text for a number of 'telling' articles relative to slave-emancipation, in which

an appeal is made to the American Congress on the expediency of taking the colony in hand.

Many other important events transpire while I am fulfilling my duties of correspondent to the *New York Trigger*.

Prominent among these, is the return from Santo Domingo of the Spanish army after another unsuccessful attempt to establish a footing in that island. In order to assure the people of Cuba that the campaign has been attended with 'glorious' results, a public fiesta in honour of the return of General Gandarias and his followers is celebrated in our town. The streets are gaily decorated, and a certain cannon, which had been captured in Montecristo by the Spaniards, is wheeled on a cart through the streets, followed by a procession of soldiers and a band of music. This cannon—which is a heavy-looking, unserviceable weapon of the old-fashioned calibre—is made much of by everybody, and finally a niche is built in a wall of the cathedral, and the 'cañon de Montecristo,' as it is henceforth derisively termed by the Cubans, is deposited in this niche with a railing before it, and an inscription above, in which the people of Cuba are reminded of the 'glorious campaign of Santo Domingo.'

Shortly after the appearance of the cañon de Montecristo, some vessels of war from the seat of hostilities arrive with a vast cargo of sick and wounded Spaniards. 'The Loyal and Ever-faithful' inhabitants of Santiago meet them on board, and some volunteer to convey the infirm soldiers to the hospitals in town. Nicasio and I are pressed into this service by our good friend Doctor Francisco, who is the head medical officer of the garrison. Each soldier, as he is landed, is placed on a canvas stretcher, provided with a

couple of stout poles, and in this manner he is borne on the shoulders of four volunteers. When all have safely disembarked, a procession is formed, and headed by a band of music, we march slowly through the streets in the direction of Santa Ana, where the military hospital is situated. The distance is about two miles, and we have to move with extreme care so as to aggravate as little as possible the sufferings of the wounded men.

The individual whom Nicasio and I, assisted by a couple of friends, have volunteered to convey, is the young Spanish officer Don Manuel, the betrothed of Don Benigno's daughter. He does not appear to be seriously wounded, for he chats pleasantly with us on the way and gives us a vivid description of his late experiences.

Arrived at the hospital, we deposit our burthens on their respective couches, where the poor fellows are, in due time, left to the tender care of Doctor Francisco and his assistant surgeons.

Don Manuel is one of the first whom the doctor visits. A ball has lodged in the young fellow's hip, but he endures his painful operation bravely. While the ball is being extracted, Don Manuel smokes cigarettes, and converses with those around him.

I gather from the communicative young officer much information respecting the late war. He tells me that the Spanish soldiers acted with their accustomed valour, and did their best to vanquish their black opponents; but that in spite of their efforts, the enemy proved more than a match for them. The guerilla mode of warfare adopted by the swarthy warriors, assisted by the bad roads and impenetrable country, together with the fatal effects of the

climate, combined to defeat the assailants, and, after many fruitless attempts, attended with considerable losses to the Spanish army, the troops were ordered to withdraw from the scene of hostilities.

Always with an 'eye to business,' my partner and I improve the occasion by obtaining, sundry commissions for portraits of some of the distinguished officers who had fallen in the late campaign. One of the more important works of this kind is a large historical picture, in which the illustrious commander of the expedition and his staff of officers are introduced. In order to ensure correct likenesses of the individuals who are to figure in our painted production, photographs, and military uniforms are supplied for our use. Many weary weeks are devoted to this *capo d'opera*, and when the picture is completed, it is handsomely framed and exhibited to an admiring crowd in one of the saloons of the governor's palace.

The war of Santo Domingo being over and forgotten, the town is again enlivened by the arrival of the Spanish fleet fresh from Peru after the unsatisfactory bombardment of Callao. The vessels are anchored in the Cuban harbour and include the iron-clad steamer 'Numancia,' commanded by Admiral Mendez Nunez; the 'Villa de Madrid' with Captain Topete on board; the 'Resolucion' and the 'Almanza.' Our illustrious visitors are lionised for nearly a week at the public expense. Banquets, balls and other entertainments are given in their honour; and in acknowledgment of these attentions, the officers of the 'Numancia,' before the fleet takes its departure, give a grand ball on board their vessel, to which the leading families of Santiago are invited. The upper deck of the iron-clad is covered

with a gigantic awning, and is so disguised with flowers, tropical plants, and other adornments, that the guests can scarcely realise the fact that they are actually on board a man-of-war. A long supper table is laid between decks, and here the visitors are invited to inspect the gunnery arrangements and a certain part of the vessel which had sustained some damage during the late expedition.

From some of the officers and crew of this vessel I obtain a few particulars relative to the bombardment of Callao, and these I hasten to use for the benefit of the American newspaper which I serve.

Another interesting event is the attempted escape from the town jail of upwards of two hundred prisoners. The whole town is for many days thrown into a state of alarm, for eleven out of the number succeed in effecting their escape. These are, however, eventually captured by the police, and after being tried in the usual way by court-martial, are sentenced to be shot in public. Upon the morning of the execution, there is great excitement in town. The execution is a fearful spectacle, for the firing has to be repeated more than once before the unfortunates are pronounced dead. One of the victims is my former fellow-prisoner, the communicative Indian, who, after the first shots had been fired by the soldiers, offered to confess his sins, which he had hitherto refused to do upon the plea that the instrument of confession was 'only a piece of crossed wood.'

CHAPTER XIII.

CUBAN MUSIC.

A Soirée at Don Laureano's—An eminent Violinist and Composer—Cuban Pianos—*Real* Negro Minstrels—Carnival Songs—Coloured Improvisatores.

ALL work and no play makes even a 'follower of the divine art of Apelles' a dull caballero; so when the day's toils are over, my companion and I amuse ourselves in various ways. The theatre, the Retreta, or promenade, a ball at the Philharmonic, and masquerading during the carnival season, are among our favourite diversions. Sometimes I enjoy these amusements in company with my partner; but when his society is denied me, I avail myself of the companionship of my friend Tunicú, who is a great authority in all matters appertaining to the 'gay and festive.'

Being fond of music, Tunicú introduces me to his friend Laureano, who is a favourite musical composer and an accomplished violinist. In appearance, Don Laureano strongly resembles the renowned Paganini, and it is for this reason, together with his marvellous performances on the violin, that his admirers sometimes advise him to visit Europe and America.

Don Laureano is chiefly employed as leader of the theatrical band and as conductor of the orchestra which

performs on fiestas at the cathedral. He also gives lessons in pianoforte and violin playing, and composes songs and 'zarzuelas.' Once this accomplished gentleman wrote an entire oratorio of some five hundred pages, which after being printed and gorgeously bound, was presented to Her Catholic Majesty the Queen of Spain.

Laureano gives musical matinées and soirées at his private dwelling. Everybody in the town being personally acquainted with him, no special invitations are issued, but those who are inclined to enjoy a little music, have only to enter the Don's open door, which has direct communication with his reception room. Those who can obtain neither seats nor standing-room, remain in the street, where, the huge windows of the musician's house being devoid of glass, the performances are perfectly audible. Negroes and mulattoes of all shades are among the spectators of the pavement; but with the exception of a few coloured musicians, only white people are admitted within the building.

The programme of entertainments includes popular melodies, selections from oratorios, zarzuelas and Cuban dances. Laureano is assisted by his son, Laureanito, who, notwithstanding his tender years, is a proficient on the piano. This youthful prodigy usually accompanies his parent when the latter enraptures his audience with a brilliant solo performance on his favourite instrument.

Don Laureano is fond of comparing 'musical notes' with foreigners, and finding that I sing comic songs and strum a little on the piano, he occasionally prevails upon me to oblige the company with some of my reminiscences of popular European airs.

The productions of such foreigners as have been inspired to compose pieces founded on Cuban music, are also included in Don Laureano's repertory. Ravina's far-famed 'Habaneros,' Gottschalk's 'Ojos Criollos' and Salaman's 'Spanish Caprice,' are favourites with a Cuban audience. But, like all Cuban and Spanish music, they require to be played with a certain local sentiment, and it is for this reason that the most accomplished European performers often fail to satisfy the Cuban musical appetite. Under the practised hands of a Cuban player, however, every justice is done to the compositions I have quoted.

Don Laureano's piano does not differ from any other piano, save that its mechanism is in some way adapted to suit the requirements of a tropical climate. Pianos of American manufacture are popular in Cuba; but Pleyel's instruments are preferred by some, on account of their soft tone and durability. A piano is an expensive luxury in the West Indies; its intrinsic value being comparatively small when the cost of its transfer from Europe or America, and the duty charged thereon, are considered. Pianos, moreover, do not last as long in the tropics as they do in colder climates, and great care is accordingly taken of their delicate machinery. To ensure against any moisture which may ascend from the marble or brick floor of the chamber in which the instrument is lodged, small glass cups are placed as insulators under the castors. It is considered highly detrimental to the tone of a piano to use it during damp or wet weather; so, on a rainy day, the instrument is locked up and the key carefully concealed by its owner.

Among the coloured community are many accomplished performers on every instrument except the piano; for,

somehow, the dark digits of these gentlemen do not adapt themselves to the white and black ivories.

Veritable 'negro minstrels' are, in Cuba, as plentiful as blackberries; but, as they 'never perform out of' the island, their renown is purely local. The mulatto, Urriola, is famous for his performances on the cornet-à-piston and the double-bass, and his young son is a favourite flute-player. Lino Boza is the name of a distinguished negro performer on the clarionet. He is also a popular composer of Cuban dance music. These musical geniuses are all free, and reside in La Calle del Rey Pelayo—a quarter of the town much frequented by the emancipated tribes.

Urriola and his son, together with Lino Boza and other black and brown gentlemen, are great acquisitions in the orchestras of the theatre, the cathedral, and the public balls; but their services are mostly in request during the carnival season, and on certain fiestas. They are, indeed, in such demand for the latter occasions, that engagements with them are entered into days before these festivities take place, and not unfrequently the same band is required to play at a dozen different localities in one day.

The 'Danza Criolla' is the patriotic music of Cuba, and every fresh carnival gives birth to a new set of these 'danzas.' When the air happens to be unusually 'pegajoza,' or catching, a brief song is improvised, and the words of this song chime so well with the music which suggests them, as to form a sort of verbal counterpart of the melody.

The merits of these songs are not, however, confined to a judicious selection of words to suit the air. There is often a quaint local humour conveyed in the doggerel verses; the charm being greatly enhanced by the intro-

duction of creole slang and mispronounced Spanish. Fragments of these effusions occasionally degenerate into street sayings, which are in everybody's mouth till the next carnival. One of the most popular during a certain year was 'Tocólo mejor que tu!' which means Tocólo is a better fellow than you. Other equally choice refrains—though not to be rendered into corresponding English—are 'Amarillo! suenemelo pinton,' and 'Calabazon, tu estás pinton.'

The following ditty, attached to a favourite Cuban danza, called 'La Chupadera,' meets with many admirers. In the original it begins:—

¡ Ay ! si lo sé, que yo estoy diciendo,
Que la chupadera á real está vendiendose,
Cuando chupamos, cuando llueve, todo mojamos, &c.

which emphatically affirms that at a certain period of the (carnival) day one may become comfortably tipsy for the small sum of five-pence, and it further demonstrates how rain and rum can alike moisten the human body.

Here is some wholesome advice for procrastinating people:—

¡ Ay ! Policarpio ; toma la sopa,
Mientras que está caliente ;
Tomela, chino, que te se enfria !

in which Policarpio is recommended to drink his soup while it is hot, and not to wait until the nourishment is cold and unpalatable.

¡ Arrempuja ! que por el hoyo se engarta la aguja.

is equally sententious. Forward! for remember that the needle can only be threaded through its eye.

The following brief song speaks in praise of the neighbours at Santo Domingo :—

Por un Español doy medio ;
Por un Cubano—un doblón ;
Y por un Dominicano
¡ Doy vida y corazon !

in which a Spaniard is estimated at two-pence, a Cuban at a doubloon, and a Dominican at nothing less than 'life and soul.'

Here is some sage advice for a young lady seeking a husband :—

Chiquilla, si te casarás,
Cásate con un 'scribano ;
Qu' aunque no tenga dinero,
Siempre con la pluma en mano—

recommending to her notice a hard-working clerk, who, although possibly deficient in fortune, has the power of earning one with his pen.

A baker is (in song) also considered an eligible match in preference to a tobacconist, for whereas the latter cannot always provide the necessaries of life, the former is at least sure of bread, chocolate (which every Cuban baker manufactures and sells), and a few 'reales,' at a very early hour of the day ; as the original words clearly demonstrate :—

La mujer del tabaquero
No tiene nada seguro.
La mujer del panadero
Todo lo tiene seguro ;
Que á las cinco de la mañana
Tiene el pan y el chocolate,
Y los tres reales, seguros.

The following is a specimen of a serenade, which is

more remarkable for its local associations than for its originality :—

No te causas espanto, ne admiracion,
Que los que te cantan, tus amigos son.
Y abrime la puerta, que estoy en la calle ;
Que dirán la gente?—Que es un desaire !
Cuatro rosas traigo, en cada mano dos,
No te canto más, porque ya nos vamos.

Fear not, nor marvel greatly ; for those who sing at your window are your truest friends. So, open wide your doors to me, for behold me in the street. And what will people say, then? Why sure, that you are slighting me ! I bring with me four roses fresh—two in every hand ; but I'll sing to you no more, because—we all must go elsewhere.

Songs similar to those quoted are usually delivered by negroes and mulattoes at their tertulias or evening gatherings, where, seated on leather-bottomed chairs, or squatting at the portals of their doors, they entertain their black and brown divinities. One of the party accompanies himself upon a guitar, or a primitive instrument formed out of a square box upon which are arranged slips of flexible iron of different lengths and tones. Another has a strangely-fashioned harp, made from a bent bamboo, to which a solitary string is attached. The guitar player is, however, in greater demand than the rest, and is perhaps asked to favour the company with a sentimental song, such, for example, as the popular ditty called La Bayamesa, which commences :—

¿ No te acuerdes, gentil Bayamesa,
Que tu fuistes el amor de Fulgencio,
Cuando alegre en tu candida frente,
Beso ardiente imprimí, con pasion?—

that is, a certain 'gentle Bayamese' is reminded that she was the loved one of Fulgencio, who, invited by the lady's *open* countenance impressed upon it a passionate kiss.

This being unanimously approved of by the company, the dark-complexioned troubadour will probably be called upon for another song, and the following mournful ballad will perhaps be chanted:—

Yo nací solo para padecer;
¡ No te acuerdes mas de mí !
No tengo ningun placer,
Desgraciada y sin salud;
Yo nací solo para padecer.
Mira, ¡ ay ! la virtud
No se consigue así, &c.

I was born a child of tears !
Think thou then no more of me.
Life brings only grief and fears
To one worn and pale with care.
I was born a child of tears !
Ah ! can virtue linger where
Dwelleth only misery?

CHAPTER XIV.

MASQUERADING IN CUBA.

Deserted!—'Los Mamarrachos'—A French-Creole Ball—Street Masquers—Negro Amateurs—Masks and Dominoes—The Plaza de Armas—Victims of the Carnival—A Cuban Café in Holiday Time—'Comparsas'—White and Black Balls—A Moral.

IT is the twenty-eighth of December, and the thermometer stands at eighty-five in the shade. I rise with the 'ganza grulla'—our bird chronometer—that wonderful creature of the crane species, with a yard of neck, and two-feet-six of legs. Every morning at six of the clock precisely, our grulla awakens us by half-a-dozen gurgling and metallic shrieks, in a tone loud enough to be heard by his Excellency the Governor, who is a sound sleeper, and lives in a big palace half a league from our studio. I descend from my Indian grass hammock, and don a suit of the flimsiest cashmere, in compliment to the winter month, and because there is still a taste of night air in the early morning. I have to manufacture my own café noir to-day, for my companion is absent, and our servants—a stalwart Ethiop and a youthful mulatto—are both abroad, and will not return for the next three days. It is a fiesta and Friday. To-morrow is 'la ñapa,' or day of grace, 'thrown in' to the holiday-makers, to enable them to recruit their exhausted frames, which

they do by repeating the pleasurable excitement of the previous day. Then comes Sunday, another fiesta, which, in most foreign climes, is another word for day, not of rest, but of restlessness.

The leading characteristics of a Cuban carnival are the street 'comparsas,' or companies of masqueraders—'mamarrachos' as they are called in the creole vernacular—and the masked balls. Here you have a comparsa comprised of pure Africans; though you wouldn't believe it, for their flat-nosed faces are illumined by a coat of light flesh-colour, and their woolly heads are dyed a blazing crimson. The males have also assumed female attire, though their better halves have not returned the compliment. Here is another and a better comparsa, of mulattoes, with cheeks of flaming vermilion, wigs of yellow tow, and false beards. Their everyday apparel is worn reversed, and the visible lining is embellished with tinsel, paint, and ribbons. They are preceded by a band of music: a big drum, hand tambours, basket rattles, conch shells, and a nutmeg-grater. The members of this goodly company dance and sing as they pass rapidly along the streets, occasionally halting in their career to serenade a friend. Now, they pause before a cottage, at the door of which is a group of 'mulaticas francesas,' or French mulatto girls.' The maskers salute them in falsetto voices, and address them by their Christian names as a guarantee of their acquaintanceship. The girls try hard to recognise the disfigured faces of their visitors. At last:—

'Holá! Musyer Fransoir, je vous conóse!' cries a yellow divinity in creole French.

'Venici! Monte!' calls another; at which invitation,

Musyer Fransoir, who has stood confessed, ascends the narrow side steps which give entrance to the cottage, and vanishes through a diminutive door. He appears again hatless, and beckons his companions, who follow his lead with alacrity. Soon, a hollow drumming, rattling, and grating, is heard, varied by the occasional twang of an exceedingly light guitar making vain efforts to promote harmony. A shuffling of slippered feet, and voices singing, signify that a dance is pending. Everybody—meaning myself and my neighbours—moves towards the scene. Everybody passes up the perilous steps, and endeavours to squeeze into the spare apartment. A few succeed in establishing a permanent footing in the room, and the rest stand at the doorway and window, or burst through the chamber by a back door into an open yard. In carnival time, everybody's house is everybody else's castle.

There is a perfect Babel at the French criolla's. Some are endeavouring to dance with little more terra firma to gyrate upon than 'La Nena' had on her foot square of table. Others are beating time on tables, trays, and tin pots. Somebody has brought a dismal accordion, but he is so jammed up in a corner by the dancers, that more wind is jerked out of him than he can possibly jerk out of his instrument. The man with the faint guitar is no better off. Every now and then a verse of dreary song is pronounced by one of the dancers.

Here is a specimen :—

¡ Ay ! Caridad ; ¡ ay ! Caridad ; ¡ ay ! Caridad,
Cuidao' con la luna si te dá.
¡ Ca-la-ba-zon ! tu estás pinton.

(Oh ! Charity, Charity, foolish Charity.
Beware of the moon, and avoid her *clarity* !)

There is a pause—an interval of ten minutes or so for refreshments. English bottled ale, at two shillings the bottle, is dispensed, together with intensely black coffee, which leaves a gold-brown stain on the cup in proof of its genuineness; and this is followed by the indispensable nip of the native brandy, called aguardiente. Stumps of damp cigars are abandoned for fresh ones, and the air is redolent of smoke, beer, and brown perspiration. If you remain long in this atmosphere, which reminds you of a combination of a London cook-shop and a museum of stuffed birds and mummies, you will become impregnated by it, and then not all the perfumes of Araby will eradicate it from your system.

I need not go far to witness the street sights in carnival time. Many of them I can enjoy from my position on my balcony. 'Enter' the shade of an Othello in false whiskers. He is attired in a red shirt, top boots, and a glazed cap. In his mouth is a clay pipe; in his hand a black bottle: both products of Great Britain. He is followed by a brother black, in the disguise of a gentleman, with enormous shirt collars and heavy spectacles. In his arms rests a colossal volume, upon which his attention is riveted, and against the brim of his napless hat is stuck a lighted taper. He stumbles along with uneven step, and occasionally pauses for the purpose of giving tongue to his profound cogitations. The crowd jeer him as he passes, but he is unmoved, and the expression of his copper-coloured countenance is ever grave and unchangeable. His eyes—or more correctly speaking, his spectacles—never wander from the mystic page, save when he trims his taper of brown wax, or exchanges it for another and a longer. One

cannot help remarking how on all occasions the 'oppressed' negro preserves his natural gravity. Whether it be his pleasure or his pain, he takes it stoically, without any observable alteration in his sombre physiognomy.

How do you reconcile the singular anomaly of a nigger with his face painted black? Here is one, whose face and bare arms are besmeared with soot and ink. His thick lips start out in bright scarlet relief, his eyebrows are painted white, and his spare garments (quite filthy enough before) are bedaubed with tar and treacle. This piece of grimy humanity is worthy of note as showing that the despised nigger is really not so black as he is painted; if the truth were known, perhaps, the man himself has adopted this disguise with a view to prove to the meditative world that there may yet be another, and a blacker, population!

It is not wise to be too contemplative, and to stay at home, on a carnival day in Cuba. All the world recognises you in the character of a moralising recluse, and all the carnival world will surely make you its victim. As I sit, despising these frivolities, as I call them, a great 'comparsa' of whites—the genuine article—comes rushing along in my direction. Out of the carnival season, the dramatis personæ of this comparsa are respectable members of society, in white drill suits and Spanish leather boots. To-day they are disreputable-looking and unrecognisable. Their faces are painted black, red, and mulatto-colour. Their disguise is of the simplest, and withal most conspicuous nature, consisting of a man's hat and a woman's chemise—low-necked, short-sleeved, and reaching to the ground. They dance, they sing, and jingle rattles and other toys, and are followed by a band of music of the legitimate kind. In it are

violins, a double-bass, a clarionet, a French horn, a bassoon, a brace of tambours, and the indispensable nutmeg-grater, performed upon with a piece of wire exactly as the actual grater is by the nutmeg. The musicians, who are all respectably dressed blacks, hired for the occasion, play the everlasting 'Danza Cubana.' This is Cuba's national dance, impossible to be described as it is impossible to be correctly played by those who have never heard it as executed by the native. In a country where carnivals are objected to by the police, I have heard but one pianoforte player who, in his very excellent imitation of the quaint music of 'La Danza,' has in the least reminded me of the original, with its peculiar hopping staccato bass and running and waltzing treble; but he had long been a resident in the Pearl of the Antilles.

The comparsa just described has halted before my balcony, as I guessed it would from the fact that its members were white people, and possibly friends. Oh, why did I not follow Nicasio's example and accept José Joaquin's invitation last evening to make one of a comparsa of wax giantesses! But I preferred seclusion to-day, and must take the consequences! Here they come straight into my very balcony with their 'Holá! Don Gualterio. No me conóces?' in falsetto voices. Do I know you? How should I in that ungentlemanly make-up? Let me see. Yes, Frasquito it is, by all that's grimy! What! and Tunicú, too, and Bimba? I feel like Bottom the weaver when he summoned his sprites. Que hay, amigos? By this time my amigos have taken unlawful possession of my innermost apartments. It's of no use to expostulate. I must bottle up my indignation, and uncork my pale ale.

I do the latter by producing all my English supply of that beverage; but it proves insufficient. The thirst of my burglarious intruders is not easily sated. The cry is still: 'Cerveza!' Convinced that I have exhausted all my beer, they are content to fall back upon aguardiente; which very plebeian liquor, to judge from their alcoholic breath, my guests have been falling back upon ever since the morning.

'Musica! Vamos á bailar!' The chemised cavaliers propose a dance. Musica! The musica strikes up with a deafening echo under my spacious roof. At the inspiring tones of 'La Danza,' a dozen spectators from the pavement, consisting chiefly of mulatto girls and white neighbours, invite themselves in. Here's a pretty thing! An extemporised public masked ball in my private dwelling in the middle of the day! If this were Cornwall-road, Bayswater, I would have every one of them prosecuted for trespass. Music—a! Aguardiente! They combine singing with dancing, and mix these with cigar smoking and aguardiente drinking. To save my credit, the genuine white brandy I provide is diluted to ten degrees of strength, and costs only two dollars and a quarter the garafon! I find myself suddenly whirled round by one of my uninvited visitors. I would not have selected such a partner, but I have no choice. Smoke is said to be a disinfectant; so I smoke as I dance. For the closeness of the atmosphere, and the muskiness of mulatto girls, are not congenial to one's olfactory and respiratory organs. At last the final drop of aguardiente is drained, the music ceases, and my friends, and my friends' friends, and the strangers that were without my gate, take their not unwelcome departure.

This has been a warning, which, as I live, I'll profit by.

I extemporise and assume a home-made disguise. A strange sensation of guilt, of going to do something wrong, comes over me and makes me quake from the top of my extemporised turban to the sole of my sandal slippers. Whither shall I wander, forlorn pantomimist that I am? I loiter about the least frequented neighbourhoods, until the shades of eve—which in this climate come with a rush—have fallen, and then I mix fearlessly with the throng, among whom I am but as a drop in a Black Sea. In my peregrinations I meet a company of negro masqueraders, who, without the least ceremony, are entering the private dwelling of an opulent Don. The illustrious family are tranquilly seated in the elegant sala; but what care their visitors? It is carnival time and they, serfs of that same house, are licensed to bring themselves and their friends. They bear between them a painted screen, which they unfold and plant in the middle of the saloon. It forms a theatrical proscenium on a small scale. An orchestra of tambours, tin-trays, and nutmeg-grating güiros opens the performances, and then the actors proceed to saw the air. They perform this operation in turn, by reason of the limited proportions of their stage; and one very tall negro, who appears to have been altogether omitted in the carpenter's calculations, has to speak his speech behind the top drop. He speaks it trippingly too; for in the middle of a most exciting monologue, he upsets the whole paraphernalia and himself into the bargain. The entertainment, including refreshments, has lasted some fifteen minutes, when the itinerant troupe (who derive no benefit from their labours save what honour and self-enjoyment yield) pick up their portable proscenium and walk away.

By far the gayest region of the city during a carnival is the spacious square called the Plaza de Armas. Here are the governor's house, the residences of Cuban Belgravia, the cafés, and the cathedral. Myriads of masqueraders, in every variety of motley and domino, congregate in the plaza after their day's perambulations, and dance, sing, or bewitch each other with their disguises. There is a party of masqued and dominoed ladies: genuine whites all—you can tell it by the shape of their gloveless hands and the transparent pink of their finger-nails—endeavouring to hoax a couple of swains in false noses and green spectacles, both of whom have been already recognised. The perplexed youths try their hardest to discover their fair interlocutors by peeping at their profiles through their wire masks, but in vain. At the next quiet tertulia these same ladies will have rare fun with their puzzled victims of the night of the masquerade. Within earshot of where I am standing are a small crew of ancient mariners, Britons every one of them; unless they happen to be Americans from Boston: it does not matter which to a Cuban. They belong to the good ship *Mary Barker*, lately arrived from Halifax, in quest of Cuban copper. Jack has come ashore to-night to see the sights and collect material for a new yarn, which he will deliver at his native fireside one of these odd days. Some masker has approached the group, and has brought them the astounding information that he—the unknown—belongs to the *Mary Barker*. Jack turns to his messmates with a bewildered air. Then, addressing the masker, 'What, Joe?' says he at a venture.

'No, not Joe,' says the man behind the mask. 'Try again.'

'Shiver my timbers!' exclaims Jack, 'I give it up. Here, Tom,' says he to a shipmate of that name, 'you're good at conhumdrums; just step for'ard and tell this here lubber who he his.'

Tom tries and fails, but arrives at the possible conclusion that it is 'some o' them 'ere Cubeyans a-making game on us.'

Refreshment stalls stand at intervals along the pavement of the plaza. Each table has a white tablecloth, and is dimly illumined by candles sheltered from the wind by enormous stand shades of glass, or lamps of portable gas. Leather-bottomed chairs are placed invitingly around, and charcoal braziers for warming drinks keep their respectful distances. Egg-flip, bottled ale, café noir, and a kind of soupe à la Julienne, called by the natives 'aijaco,' are dispensed by negress vendors, who charge double for everything, and drive a roaring trade. Approaching one of the tables, I call for a plate of aijaco, and am perfectly understood by the dark divinity, who places before me a pot-pourri of yams, green bananas, cut pumpkins, 'aguacates,' chicken, and broth of the same. I do full justice to this rich and substantial repast, and, by way of dessert, conclude with a very small cup of properly made café noir and a genuine Yara. I then betake myself to the nearest coffee-house. After black coffee cometh what is popularly termed 'plus-café,' and this being an unlicensed spirit, cannot be had in the street. The coffee-saloon is well patronised, and the air of carnival is here very strong. Everybody and everything seem to follow the masquerade lead, the very furniture forming no exception to the rule: for the gas chandeliers are encased in fancy papers, the walls

and pictures are adorned by tropical leaves and evergreens, the chairs are transformed into shapes of seated humanity, the marble slabs of the little round tables are partially disguised in robes of glass and crystal. As for the white-jacketed proprietor and his myrmidons, including Rubio, the mixer of liquors, behind the counter, they all wear smiles or holiday faces, while they carefully conceal their natural sleepiness.

'Mozo! garçon! Una copita con cognac!' The waiter hears, but does not obey, having already too many copitas on his mind. 'Allá voy, señor!' he, however, says; and as it is some consolation to know that he will come eventually, I forgive his procrastination, and bide my time. Meanwhile, I watch a group of maskers who surround a guitar-playing improvisatore, who assures his audience in song that he is expiring because of the faithlessness of his mulatto, who has rejected his advances with ridicule.

¡ Ay, ay, ay ! que me estoy muriendo, si.
¡ Ay, ay, ay ! por una mulata ;
Y ella está reyendose,
Que es cosa que me mata !

In an opposite corner are a pair of moralising Davids gravely descanting upon the frailty of woman to the accompaniment of a windy accordion and a güiro nutmeg-grater, something after this fashion :—

Women there are in this world, we see,
Whose tongues are long enough for three ;
They bear their neighbours' skins about,
And twist and turn them inside out.
Pellejo ajeno ! lo víran al revés.

This is the whole song, and nothing but the song : for

negro melodies, of which the above is a specimen, are essentially epigrammatic.

A rush is made to the big barred windows and open doors of the café. An important comparsa of Congo negroes of both sexes is passing in procession along the street. They have just been paying their respects to no less a personage than his Excellency the Governor of Santiago, in the long reception-room of whose palace, and in whose august presence they have dared to dance! The troupe is headed by a brace of blacks, who carry banners with passing strange devices, and a dancing mace-bearer. These are followed by a battalion of colonels, generals, and field-marshals, in gold-braided coats and gilded cocked-hats. Each wears a broad sash of coloured silk, a sword and enormous spurs. These are not ordinary masqueraders be it known, but grave subjects of his sombre majesty King Congo, the oldest and blackest of all the blacks: the lawfully appointed sovereign of the coloured community. It seems to form part of the drilling of his majesty's military to march with a tumble-down, pick-me-up step, for as each member of the corps moves, he is for ever losing his balance and finding his equilibrium; but whether on the present occasion this remarkable step proceeds from loyalty or liquor, I cannot say. In the rear of his Congo Majesty's officers are a crowd of copper-coloured amazons, in pink muslins trimmed with flowers and tinsel, who march trippingly in files of four, at well-measured distances, and form a connecting link with each other by means of their pocket-handkerchiefs held by the extreme corners. Each damsel carries a lighted taper of brown wax, and a tin rattle, which she jingles as she moves.

The whole procession terminates in a military band, composed of musicians whose hard work and little pay are exhibited in their uniforms, which are limited to buttonless shirts and brief unmentionables. Their instruments are a big drum, hand tambours, huge cone-shaped basket rattles, a bent bamboo harp with a solitary string, and the indispensable güiro or nutmeg-grater. There is harmony in this outline of an orchestra, let him laugh who may. No actual tune is there, but you have all the lights and shadows —the skeleton, so to speak—of a tune, and if your imagination be musical, that will suffice to supply the melody. The peculiar measure adopted in the negro drum-music, and imitated in 'La Danza' and in church-bell chiming, has an origin which those who have a taste for natural history will do well to make a note of. There is an insect—I forget the name, but you may hear it any fine night in the wilds of a tropical country—that gives out a continuous croak, which exactly corresponds with this measure.

'Al fin y al cabo,' I have taken my plus-café; and now that it is very early morning, I take the nearest way to my virtuous home. On my way thither, I pause before the saloons of the Philharmonic, where a grand bal masqué of genuine, and doubtful, whites is being held. From my position on the pavement I can see perfectly well into the salon de bal, so I will not evade the doorkeeper, as others do, by introducing myself in disguise as somebody else. I observe that the proceedings within have already begun to grow warm. There is no lack of partners in carnival time, as everybody, save the black musicians, is dancing the everlasting contra-danza. Some of the excited toe-trippers have abandoned their masks. One of these, an olive-complexioned señorita,

wears a tell-tale patch of blue paint on her left cheek; condemning testimony that at some period of the evening she dánced with that 'mamarracho' whose face is painted like an Indian chief! In a dark corner of the billiard-room, where two gentlemen attired in the garb of Philip the Second are playing carambola against a couple of travestied Charles the Fifths, are seated a snug couple—lover and mistress to all appearance. The dominoed lady is extremely bashful, her replies are brief and all but inaudible. The fond youth has proposed a saunter into the refreshing night air, where a moon, bright enough to read the smallest print by, is shining. His proposal is acceded to. His heart is glad now: but what will his feelings be when he discovers that the beloved object is a bearded brute like himself! The orchestra is playing one of Lino Boza's last danzas. Lino Boza is, as I have already stated, a negro composer and clarionet player of great renown in Cuba, and this particular danza is one of the 'pegajosa' or 'irresistible' kind. You have heard it played all over the town to-day, and to-morrow you will hear it sung with a couple of doggerel rhymes in creole Spanish, which fit into the music so well as to 'appear to be the echoes of the *melody*.' The way in which Lino helps the dancers in their favourite gyrations by his inimitable and ever-varied performance on the clarionet, should be a warning to protecting mammas! The step of 'La Danza' is difficult for an amateur to acquire, but when once it is achieved, and you are fortunate enough to secure a graceful partner, the result is highly satisfactory. I am almost tempted to trespass upon the early hours of the morning, for the sake of the music of 'La Danza' and those open-air refresh-

ment stalls where everything looks hot and inviting. The night breeze is, moreover, cool and exhilarating, and, after all, it is not later than nine P.M.—in Europe. I lead on, nevertheless, in the direction of the heights of El Tivoli, where I reside; stopping not in my upward career, save to pay a flying visit at a ball of mulattoes. A crowd of uninvited are gazing, like myself, between the bars of the huge windows; for the ball is conducted upon exclusive principles, and is accessible only with tickets of admission. Two 'policias,' armed with revolvers and short Roman swords, are stationed at the entrante-door, and this looks very much like the precursor of a row. Mulatto balls generally do end in some unlooked-for 'compromisa,' and it would not surprise me if this particular ball were to terminate in something sensational.

I am home, and am myself again, ruminating upon the events of the day and night, and I arrive at the conclusion that the despised and oppressed negro is not so ill off as he is made out to be, especially in carnival time. As I enter, our grulla thinks it must be six o'clock, and essays to shriek that hour, as is her custom; but I startle her in the middle of her fourth chime, and she stops at half-past three. Then I climb into my aërial couch, in whose embrace I presently invoke that of the grim masker, Morpheus!

CHAPTER XV.

AN EVENING AT THE RETRETA.

A Musical Promenade—My Friend Tunicú—Cuban Beauties—Dark Divinities—A Cuban Café—A Popular 'Pollo'—Settling the Bill.

THE Retreta is a musical promenade, or 'retreat,' held upon the evenings of every Sunday and Thursday, between the hours of eight and ten, in the Plaza de Armas. Here all the fashionables of Santiago congregate, to converse and to listen to the military band. Those who reside in the square itself, or in the adjacent streets, have a few ordinary chairs conveyed from their houses and planted in a convenient situation near the music. The promenade is a broad gravel walk, in the centre of a railed square, and is bounded by little garden plots, fountains, and huge overhanging tropical trees. Those who have not brought with them any domestic furniture, occupy, when weary with walking, the stone benches at the outskirts of the square and in the line of march. The promenaders form a kind of animated oval as they parade the boundaries of the gravel walk, and they consist chiefly of ladies attired in pretty muslin dresses, but divested of all head covering save that which nature lavishly supplies. The interior of the moving oval thus formed is exclusively occupied by gentlemen,

dressed either in suits of white drill, Panama hats, and shoes of Spanish leather, or in black coats and tall beaver 'bómbas.' These fashionables wander about their allotted ground, occasionally halting to contemplate the moving panorama of divinities, by which they are encircled. There is much to admire in the plainest of creoles, whether the point of attraction be her graceful manner of walking—and in this no other lady can equal her—the taste exhibited in her dress, or in the arrangement of her luxuriant hair.

My friend Tunicú is a great authority upon the subject of Cuban beauty, and appears to be a favourite with everybody. Like most young creoles of his kind, Tunicú prides himself upon his intimacy with everybody of importance in the town. From his point of view, the inhabitants of Santiago belong to one gigantic family, the different members of which are all, more or less, related to one another, and to him. Tunicú has this family, so to speak, at his fingers' ends, and is full of information respecting their antecedents and their private concerns. He points out for me some of the leading families who are present at the promenade. He shows me which are the Palacios, the Castillos, the Torres, the Brooks, and the Puentes. Those cane chairs are occupied by the Agramontes, the Duanys, the Vinents, and the Quintanas. Upon the stone benches are seated the Bravos, the Valientes, and the Villalons. Those ladies who have just joined the promenaders belong to the distinguished families of the Ferrers, the Fajados, the Fuentes, the Castros, and the Colases. He offers to present me to any of the company whom I may care to become acquainted with ; and in proof of his intimacy with everybody who passes us, he salutes

many of the ladies, and addresses them, whether they be married or single, by their Christian names.

'Adios, Carmecita!' he remarks, as a young lady of that name sails by us.

'Au revoir, Manuelica!' he says to a dark beauty with remarkably large eyes and exaggerated eyelashes.

'A tus piés, lovely Teresita!' says he to another olive-complexioned damsel, whose chief attractions are a very perfect profile and an intelligent brow.

'Till we meet again, Marianita!' he observes, when Marianita, who has a pretty figure and small hands, passes our way.

'How bewitching you look to-night, my pretty Panchita!' he murmurs, as a charming young girl, with fair hair and a pink and white complexion, blushes and hurries on.

'Farewell, my fascinating Frasquita!' he ejaculates to an equally blonde creole.

Tunicú's fair hearers apparently do not disapprove of these al fresco compliments, but occasionally acknowledge them by bestowing upon him a momentary smile or a graceful inclination of the head, as they do with scores of admirers, who, like Tunicú, venture to give voice to their sentiments.

Whenever I question my loquacious friend about anybody in whom I may feel interested, he positively overwhelms me with the most minute particulars respecting his or her antecedents.

For example: Fulana de Tal is a visitor at Don Benigno's, and for some mysterious reason Doña Mercedes has, on more than one occasion, offered her pecuniary assistance.

'Do you know that lady?' I inquire, as Fulana de Tal seats herself beside Doña Mercedes.

'Fulana de Tal!' exclaims Tunicú with a contemptuous chuckle; 'I should rather think I do! Fulana de Tal, widow of the late Timothy de Tallo y Gallo, the large importer of soap and composites, in Candela Street number sixty-eight, corner of Vela Lane, opposite Snúfa's the ironmonger. Old Timothy de Tallo failed for forty thousand dollars four years and ten months ago; ran away from his creditors and embarked for France, where he died fourteen months after his arrival in Paris. His widow, related to my uncle Benigno, was left destitute with three children—two boys, and one girl named Fefita. But nobody starves in my country! Fefita is engaged to Nicolás, son of Nicolás Neira, director of the St. Michael copper mines. They say young Nicolás will have thirty thousand dollars if he marries, and when his governor dies will be a millionaire. Old Nicolás is awfully lucky—won a hundred thousand dollars in the Havana lottery upon one occasion, and twenty thousand on another. He has three coffee plantations and two sugar estates. One of them is worked by no less than four hundred and fifty slaves. Car-amba! you should see the procession of mules that arrives in town every day from the Camino del Cobre: each beast laden with sacks weighing nearly two hundredweight. When Fefita marries, her mother will be well off again; meanwhile Don Benigno supports her, though nobody is supposed to know it.'

'Who is that charming girl with the neat little figure and the dark frizzled hair?' I inquire, as the object of my

admiration, accompanied by an elderly lady, passes close to where I am standing.

'Oh! that is Cachita,' says Tunicú; 'Cachita Perales, with her mother Doña Belen—amiable but weak old lady; very much directed by her husband Don Severiano, who is an old brute—plenty of "paja "(tin) though, but close-fisted.'

'I fancy I have met the younger lady at the theatre, and at other places of amusement,' I observe.

'Very likely,' says Tunicú. 'Cachita is fond of amusement. You see, she has no lover yet to fall back upon, as it were. Lots of admirers, though; but the old man wants to wed her to young Amador, son of old Catasus, the rich planter; and the sensible young lady dislikes Amador because he is a Spaniard, and a coxcomb into the bargain.'

'Are you very intimate with the Perales?' I ask.

'Intimate!' repeats my friend with a scornful smirk. 'Well, I look in at their tertulia at least twice a week. But you seem interested in the family—sweet upon the señorita, eh! Admire your taste—acknowledged beauty, you know.'

'Can you introduce me to the young lady and her mama?' I ask.

Can he? of course he can! He has been waiting till now to do so.

I am accordingly presented to the ladies as 'El Caballero Inglés, Don Gualterio, bosom companion of Don Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú,' whom everybody has heard of. Then all four stroll round the promenade; Tunicú artfully engaging the old lady, and leaving me to do the amiable with the pretty creole.

As we walk and converse, the military band continues to

play operatic selections, zarzuela medleys, pots-pourris of favourite airs and Cuban dances. At ten o'clock precisely the music ceases, and the band removes to the governor's house which faces the square. At a given signal, a quick march is played, and before the music is half over, the instrumentalists depart in procession through the streets leading to their barracks.

We now take leave of our lady friends, who intimate their intention of being present at the Philharmonic rooms, where a grand ball has been advertised for to-night. Many of the invited remain in the Plaza till the opening of this ball, which is announced by a band of negro minstrels who come to escort the dancers to the scene of festivities. During the promenade, partners have been already engaged, and as Tunicú is a member of the Philharmonic, and has offered to procure me an admission, I engage myself to the charming Cachita for the first three dances.

Tunicú and I occupy the interval which precedes the opening of the ball in various ways. The terrace of the cathedral, which overlooks the square, is thronged with coloured people, who, not being allowed to join in the promenade below, watch their white brethren from a distance. There is, however, among this assembly, a sprinkling of whites, some of whom are in a state of mourning, and consider it indecorous to show themselves in public; while others, like Tunicú and myself, visit the occupants of the terrace to exchange greetings with some of the dark divinities there. Tunicú is a great admirer of whitey-brown beauty, especially that which birth and the faintest coffee-colour alone distinguish from the pure and undefiled. He is also an advocate of equality of races, and like many other liberal

Cubans, sighs for the day when slavery shall be abolished. Some of the brown ladies whom he addresses belong to respectable families of wealth and importance in the town; and were it not for certain rules which society prescribes, Tunicú says they would contract the whitest of alliances.

Descending the broad flight of steps of the cathedral, Tunicú invites me to partake of some refreshment at a neighbouring café. The round marble tables of the café are crowded with fashionables fresh from the Retreta. Some of Tunicú's companions are sipping and smoking at one of these tables. The moment we appear, his friends rise, salute us elaborately, and offer us places at their festive board.

What will we take in the way of refreshment?

This requires reflection, and meanwhile we gather a suggestion or two from the libations already before us. There are sugar and water panales, cream-ices, cold fruit drinks, bottles of English ale, and 'sangria' or rum punch, to choose from.

'When you are in doubt, order café noir and a petit verre,' is Tunicú's maxim, which we both adopt on this occasion. Cups of coffee and cognac are accordingly brought, cigarettes are handed round, and the convivialities of the café proceed. The company at the Retreta is discussed, and the brown beauties of the cathedral terrace are descanted upon. One of our party, whom everybody addresses by his nickname of 'Bimba,' is more loquacious than the rest, not excepting the garrulous Tunicú.

Bimba is a popular character in Cuba, and in some respects represents a type of the creole 'pollo,' or man-about-town. He is short of stature, lean and bony. He has a long thin

face, with a very sun-burnt complexion, a prominent proboscis, and his hair, eyes and eyebrows are remarkably black and lustrous. The pollo's weakness is over-confidence in himself and in the ways of the world. To him everything appears bright and sunny. Nothing in his estimation seems impossible of realisation. If you are in a difficulty, Bimba is the man to help you through, or at least to *offer* to do so! Bimba takes especial care to let everybody know that he is a 'travelled man' and a linguist; which literally translated means, that he has spent a few weeks in Havana and a few months in New York; in which places he has acquired a smattering of two or three different languages.

Learning that I am an Englishman, Bimba improves the occasion to air all the Anglo-Saxon in his vocabulary for the edification of his friends, who marvel much at Bimba's fluency in a foreign tongue. But whether it is that my residence among Spanish-speaking people has demoralised my native lingo, or whether it is that Bimba's English has grown rusty—it is evident that at least three-fourths of his rapidly spoken words are as incomprehensible to me as they are to the rest of our party.

Bimba's knowledge is not however, confined to languages and to mundane matters. As a 'man of business' no one can surpass him; though it is never clear to anybody what kind of occupation he follows. He is, besides, conversant with most of the arts and sciences. As for painting—well; he says that he has 'dabbled' in the art for years; and though he confesses he has not practised it of late, he knows well enough what materials are used for the construction of a picture. In proof of this knowledge, he offers to introduce

me to a number of highly 'picturesque' models, and mentions a locality which, he declares, abounds with subjects worthy of an artist's attention. This locality is called La Calle del Gallo, and is a street which, I am afterwards told, is inhabited by certain coloured ladies of doubtful repute.

Being the hour of departure for the Philharmonic ball, the conversation ceases and the important operation of paying for what has been consumed must be undertaken. When a party of Cubans meet at a public refreshment-room, settling the bill is a serious matter. Everybody aspires to the privilege, and everybody presents his coin to the waiter.

'Here, garçon! Take for all,' says one of the company, offering a golden doubloon to the attendant.

'Excuse me, I spoke first,' observes another, exhibiting a gold coin of about the size of a five-shilling piece.

'No, no; it was I,' protests a third; while others, with fingers in fobs, wink and shake their heads at the bewildered waiter as if to imply that one of them will settle with the 'mozo' in secret.

The mozo will not, however, accept payment from anybody.

'Está pago ya' (it is already paid for), he observes, and walks away.

The company are amazed. Who could have been guilty of the treacherous act? and how and when was it performed?

Presently one of the party rises and feigns impatience for his departure. He smiles, and all declare that he was the culprit. Subsequently, this individual leads the waiter into a dark corner of the café, where accounts are squared; by

which we know that before the refreshments were ordered he had arranged with the garçon about payment.

'Nada, chicos!' observes the successful payee, as we quit the café, 'otra dia tocará á ustedes.' (Never mind, my boys! it will be your turn another day.)

CHAPTER XVI.

AT A CUBAN BALL.

The Philharmonic and its Members—A Street Audience—The Guests—Engaging Partners—'La Carabina'—'La Danza Criolla'—Dance Music—Refreshments—A Pretty Partner—A Night with Cuban Gamblers—Spanish Cards—An Old Hand—'Temblores!'

THE saloons of the Philharmonic are well suited for dancing as well as for other purposes. The spacious apartments are entered by enormous doors, and those which are set apart for the use of the dancers are separated one from the other by narrow slips of wall. The heat, generated by the gas, finds an easy egress through the open doors and unglazed windows, and by these means the ventilation within is only surpassed by the open air. A balcony—resembling part of a ship's upper-deck—occupies the entire breadth of the building, and it affords an excellent promenade and lounge in the intervals of dancing. The street is crowded with a mixed audience, composed of coloured people and of whites in mourning, for whose accommodation chairs of all kinds are brought from their houses in the neighbourhood. The interior of the Philharmonic is perfectly visible to these spectators of the pavement, who, consequently, watch the proceedings within, as they would watch an entertainment at the theatre.

The ladies of the ball are attired in simple muslin dresses of the grenadine, the tarlatan, or the tulle kind; but no rule is observed with regard to the cut or shape of their costume. She whom nature has endowed with a comely figure, adopts the 'decolado,' or low-necked, short-sleeved fashion, while her less favoured sisters prefer to conceal their charms behind spotted lace or tulle. In short, the frequenters of such a ball as that to which I refer are licensed to dress as becomingly as they please, and only on rare occasions, such as a ball at the theatre, at the governor's house, or at the mansion of some equally distinguished person, are the strict rules of French etiquette observed.

The señoritas and their escorts are received in an antechamber by nine of the oldest members of the society, who conduct the ladies to the dressing-room of the establishment, where a few mulatto girls are in attendance. Their toilettes being complete, it is considered 'the correct thing' for one of these nine deputies of the Philharmonic to offer to escort the lady dancers to the 'salon de bal;' and afterwards to conduct the non-dancers to a locality set apart for the 'old people,' for people in a state of mourning, and for those ladies whose lovers do not approve of their dancing.

The male dancers—the majority of whom are pale-faced gentlemen with black mustachios, imperials, and cropped hair—appear in ordinary walking costume, consisting of black frock coats, black or white vests, and white trousers, and neither they nor their fair partners include gloves in their toilettes. Fans are used irrespective of sex, as a

creole gentleman considers that such commodities are as indispensable to him as they are to his lady.

As most of the guests have already secured partners at the Retreta and elsewhere, and as at all respectable gatherings in Cuba everybody is supposed to know everybody else, the irksome formalities of introduction are altogether dispensed with.

'Me hará usted el obsequio de cederme ésta danza?' is in Spanish the politest form for asking a lady 'if you may have the pleasure of dancing with her.' But should you be on intimate terms with her, you may inform yourself whether she is willing to 'take a little turn with you,' by making the inquiry:—

'Quiere usted que demos una vueltecita?'

If the lady is 'sorry to say that she is engaged,' her answer will be, 'Lo siento; estoy comprometida.' If, on the contrary, she 'will have much pleasure,' she replies, 'Con mucho gusto.'

It is not unusual for a gentleman who is not dancing to *borrow* another gentleman's partner for a 'carabina,' or round or two; for which purpose the aspirant for that privilege has only to approach the dancing couple, and in his politest tone say—addressing his remarks indirectly to both:—

'Will the señorita be good enough to consent, with you, to my taking a turn with her?' or, as it is better expressed in Spanish, 'La señorita será bastante amable para que con usted consiente el darme una carabina?'

Sometimes when the aspirant is very intimate with the couple, he observes simply: 'Chico; una carabina?' (A

turn, old fellow?) and without waiting for a reply, seizes his friend's partner round the waist and waltzes her away.

Occasionally the carabina is taken without asking; but this is done only by certain pollos who are vain enough to believe that they confer an honour upon the ladies of their preference by confining their evening's gyrations to carabinas. These attentions, however, sometimes involve the pollo in a quarrel with the lady's partner, as happened once with a certain Acha—a Spanish officer from Guantánamo—who fought a duel for the sake of a carabina which he had danced illicitly with a famous creole beauty called La Nena.

It frequently happens that the much-desired carabina is graciously conceded to an unfortunate pollito, or very young gentleman, who has been unable to secure a partner. Tunicú often avails himself of a pollito when he happens to be afflicted with an uncongenial partner, or one whose manner of dancing does not satisfy him!

The famous 'danza criolla' is the favourite dance of the evening: indeed, with the exception of a vagrant polka and a mazurka or two, this dance occupies the entire programme.

The danza criolla requires great practice before it can be successfully accomplished; but no amount of private tuition will help the novice to acquire the approved step. The best school for the study and pursuit of the art is a mulatto ball, or such a ball as the Philharmonic society gives on every Palm Sunday at seven in the morning. There is a very mixed attendance at the last-mentioned ball, as the members usually invite their 'guariminicas,' or companions of the carnival. A Cuban pollo has generally

three ladies to whom he is devoted. The first of these is represented by the señorita whom he is destined to marry one of these days, but with whom he may not be seen alone. The second lady of his choice is the afore-mentioned 'guariminica querida,' who accompanies him about town when any fiesta is held; and the third is the mulatto beauty, whom he serenades and presents with various gifts in token of his admiration for her charms.

The step of la danza is distantly related to a slow valse; but being accompanied by certain graceful movements of the limbs—vulgarly termed, in creole vernacular, 'la sopimpa'—the excitement is far greater than it is with the fastest 'trois temps' on record. So great indeed, that after every other 'round' the couples pause and perform a kind of lady's-chain in quadrille groups of six or eight. Each dancer gives his or her favourite version of this remarkable step. Some appear to glide around as if propelled on wheels; while others define the step by hops, backward skips and short turns, now to the right, now the left; but all preserve the same graceful movements of the body.

The pleasures of the dance are greatly enhanced by the quality of the music, which is more or less inspiriting according to the air selected. Among the best Cuban dance music are the Cocuyé, the Chupadera, the Calabazon, the Sopimpa, the Mulata, the Pollita Americana, Merenguito, Lunarcitos, Al Mediodia, and 'á las Bellas Cubanas.' The clarionet takes the lead in the band of black musicians, and the güiro and tambours serve to mark the peculiar chopping compass which is the leading feature of the creole dance. The güiro proper is an instrument made from

the hard fruit whence it derives its name. The güiro of society is, however, manufactured out of tin, and shaped like a broad tube rounded at one end to a fine point. To one side is attached a handle; the other side is furnished with notches or transverse ridges, which being rapidly scraped by a piece of thick wire, a hollow, grating sound is produced. The monotony of this sound is varied on the tambours, and neither of those instruments is used when the dancers pause for the lady's-chain.

It is not unusual for an enthusiastic dancer to present the leader of the band with a piece of money, as an inducement for the latter to prolong the dance, and as a graceful tribute to his partner's dancing. But this proceeding not being always approved of by the rest of the dancers, a master of the ceremonies—called 'el bastonero'—is sometimes appointed for the purpose of regulating the duration of the dances; but as el bastonero is himself a dancer, he takes care to time the dances according to his own requirements.

At an ordinary Philharmonic ball, such as that which I am describing, the frequenters of the 'ambigú,' or refreshment room, must pay for what they consume. This is a serious consideration with the pollo, for he is expected to invite not only his partner, but also his partner's parents, brothers, or chaperones, and sometimes a friend or two of the family! The ambigú refreshment stall provides chiefly hams, lobsters, turkeys, chickens, fried fish, escabeche (another variety of fish), tongue, and other substantial viands; all of which are done full justice to by the señorita's relatives and friends! The appetite of the young lady herself is, however, more easily satisfied. A

cup of thick chocolate with 'panatela' or pound cake, and an 'helado,' or ice, is all that she requires in the way of refreshment; unless, later in the evening, she prefer a 'jigote,' which is a kind of thick soup made from boiled chicken, minced fine, and flavoured with herbs.

Adjoining the ambigú is a small apartment, where gentlemen—and some of the older ladies too—may enjoy a smoke while they sip their café and cognac.

Of course Tunicú has a variety of partners, but Bimba being partial to billiards, divides his time between the ball-room and the billiard-table.

Cachita—with whom I dance more than three times in the course of the evening—makes a delightful partner, and when, after sundry experiments, we are agreed upon the matter of step, I feel in the seventh heaven!

Cachita's manners and conversation are as agreeable as her dancing is, and combine to impress me with the fancy that our acquaintance dates from a more remote period than the present evening. Upon the strength of my being an artist, she examines me on the subject of Cuban beauty, and my replies are not unfavourable to Cachita and her countrywomen. In turn, I interrogate her on the popular impression of foreigners, and from her responses I gather that the people of nearly every country, except Spain, hold a distinguished place in a Cuban's esteem. The palm is, however, given to the Americans and English. Cachita has been early taught to regard these nations with favour, and that to possess the political and social advantages which English and Americans enjoy, is the ambition of every right-minded Cuban.

But politics is dangerous ground to tread, especially

when you are discussing them with a beautiful young lady, who expresses so much enthusiasm for your 'patria,' and who, moreover, tells you to your face that your countrymen are 'simpáticos.' There is no telling what conversation such topics might lead to, if Cachita's mamma, Doña Belen, did not interrupt our tête-à-tête by coming to inform her daughter that the ball is nearly over, and that it is time to depart.

No ball at the Philharmonic is said to have terminated until the members of the society and their male friends have indulged in a little gambling. So when the ladies and their escorts have departed, and the gas in the ball rooms has been extinguished, old as well as young pollos betake themselves to an apartment, where they pass the small hours of the night in card-playing.

Curious to learn the mysteries of Cuban gambling, I accept Tunicú's invitation to watch the proceedings, one night after such a ball as that which I have described.

The chamber into which I am conducted is illumined in one part only, where a group of gentlemen are seated or standing around a square table. Having decided whether the game of the evening shall be 'monté,' 'tresillo,' or 'burro,' the dealer proceeds to shuffle the cards, which he does in an elaborate manner, and afterwards grasps the pack firmly in his left hand, taking care to conceal the bottom card. The dealer has a partner who is seated on the opposite side of the table with a pile of golden 'onzas' before him. These onzas, which represent the 'bank,' look like medals about to be awarded as prizes for merit, for each coin is of the size of a five-shilling piece, and is

equal in value to seventeen dollars, or three pounds eight shillings sterling.

Carefully extracting four cards from the top and bottom of the pack, and after placing them, faces upwards, on the table, the dealer invites the company to stake their money. Gold in onzas, half-onzas, four-dollar pieces, and 'escudos,' or two dollars, is produced; but he who is indisposed to risk more than a fractional part of his money at one time, expresses his desire by concealing a portion of his coin beneath the card of his selection. Thus an onza placed half-way under a card signifies that the owner wishes to stake only half that coin, or eight dollars and fifty cents. Similarly a fourth of the money being exhibited, represents four dollars and twenty-five cents.

'Al juego, caballeros!' cries the dealer, and everybody accordingly stakes his money. Satisfied that the four cards are not equalised, the dealer, by a dexterous turn of the wrist, reverses the pack, by which means the bottom card is exposed. If this card does not pair with one of those on the table, other cards are slowly revealed, till one of the four on the table has been 'casado' or paired. The nine of spades being drawn, pairs with the nine of clubs on the table. The banker consequently pays on this card, and receives on that which lies by its side. The other two cards are similarly disposed of, and this, with a few variations, constitutes the game.

With the exception of 'el rey' (the king) and 'la zota' (the knave), a Spanish pack of cards differs considerably from the French or English pack. There are no tens, to begin with, consequently the total number of cards is forty-

eight. The queen is also absent. Her majesty is, however, represented by 'el caballo,' a figure of a knight on horseback. Clubs (called 'bastos') are veritable clubs of the Hercules pattern; and a spade is not a spade in this instance, but it is an 'espada,' or sword of the approved shape. Each player has a favourite card, upon which he invariably stakes his money whenever it is turned up in the course of the game. Tunicú's 'winning' colour is 'el caballo' (horse and rider). Bimba swears by the king, while his neighbour, Don Vicente, has a partiality for the royal fives of every suit. These gentlemen are fond of apostrophising the cards of their selection, as if to encourage the pasteboard to win. Thus, Tunicú not unfrequently addresses his caballo as a 'noble animal' or a 'trusty steed,' while Bimba speaks of 'el rey' as a 'right royal gentleman' and a 'just sovereign.' But when, as it too often happens, 'el caballo' proves faithless, and 'el rey' unprofitable, their praises are no longer sung, but certain disrespectful adjectives are applied to them. The Spanish language is rich in oaths, the mildest of which are some of those expressions which begin with the syllable 'Car,' such, for example, as 'Caramba!' 'Carambóla!' (the billiard cannon), 'Caracóles!' (shells), and 'Caracolito!' (a small shell).

One of the greatest gamblers at the Philharmonic is Don Vicente. Tunicú tells me, *sotto voce*, that the old gentleman has had a run of ill-luck for the past fortnight, and that, having exhausted all his ready cash, he is about to wager his 'quitrin' and horses. If the five of swords on the table is not paired in the next draw, Don Vicente will lose his equipage. The next 'turn up' being a king, and a

king being opposed to the five of swords, Don Vicente loses.

'Watch the old man now,' whispers Tunicú. I glance in the direction indicated by my companion, and observe that the gambler's right hand, which for some minutes past had been concealed beneath his shirt-front, is drawn with violence across his breast.

'A habit of his when he loses an important amount,' remarks Tunicú under his breath; 'the old fellow has torn his bare flesh.'

Except ourselves, no one present has paid the least regard to the unfortunate gamester, for until the past fortnight Don Vicente had been usually lucky.

While the dealer is in the act of shuffling a bran-new pack as a preliminary to the fiftieth game to-night, the cards suddenly fall from his fingers, and he, his partner, together with the rest of the company, turn deadly pale and rush wildly to the broad balcony.

I follow them; though for the moment I am unable to account for this strange diversion in the proceedings. In another instant, however, the truth flashes across me. The apartment which we have deserted had, for a few seconds only, oscillated as if a thousand ghosts were dancing in the empty saloons adjoining, oras if a train were passing beneath the floor.

From the balcony I observe that the dark streets are already crowded with people, most of whom are scantily clothed in night attire. Some are kneeling and praying aloud for Misericordia! others are shrieking and invoking a variety of saints, and the greatest confusion prevails.

It was only a 'temblor,' or shock of earthquake, in its

mildest form, but it may be the precursor of a more serious disaster.

'Such a calamity,' says Tunicú, 'has happened ten years ago, when the earth opened, and many buildings, including the cathedral, fell like packs of cards to the ground. The inhabitants fled in terror from the town and encamped for many days and nights in the neighbouring country, where one is comparatively out of danger.'

Before daylight, another 'temblor,' or trembling of the earth, is felt, but, like its predecessor, it is unattended with disastrous consequences.

CHAPTER XVII.

CUBAN THEATRICALS.

The Stage Door-Keeper—A Rehearsal—The Spanish Censor—A Cuban Audience—Dramatic Performances—Between Acts—Behind the Scenes—A Dénouement in Real Life.

A CALL for seven A.M. would hardly meet with a punctual response were such an announcement posted behind the stage-door of a London theatre; but in Cuba the more important business of the day is transacted during the cool hours of the morning, and it does not surprise Roscius of the West Indies when he finds himself summoned to a theatrical rehearsal some three or four hours before breakfast. After that meal, Roscius makes up for lost sleeping-time by taking a long siesta till the hour of dinner.

During rehearsal, in the theatre I am describing, the doors are open to the public, and, there being nothing to pay for admission, the stalls and private boxes are always well filled by a not very select audience. Gentlemen of colour are not inadmissible on these occasions; hats may be worn at pleasure, and smoking is so far from being strictly prohibited, that manager and actors themselves set the example. I am tempted to stroll into the theatre during rehearsal, because it is a refreshing lounge after toiling up the stony, hilly, Cuban streets, and because I

may gather a new fact or two connected with life behind the Cuban curtain, from my friend who is popularly known as El Marquesito del Queso. El Marquesito is a great authority in matters theatrical. He resides permanently in the building itself, and is paid for taking care of it by night and by day. He is, besides, property-man, costumier, and a good mimic, often obliging the manager by imitating the bark of a dog, the crow of a cock, or the bray of a donkey behind the wings. At the end of the season he is allowed half a benefit, on which occasion only he delights his numerous patrons by enacting the fore-paws in a dancing donkey, to the tune of the Zapateo, a popular negro double-shuffle. In carnival time, El Marquesito lets out dominoes and masks of his own manufacture, or faded theatrical costumes and properties; and whenever the Captain-general honours the town with his august presence, it devolves upon my friend to superintend the decorations of the houses and those of the theatre, where a grand ball to celebrate the event is held.

His imposing nickname of El Marquesito del Queso, is derived from the fact that the property-man is in the habit of supping on 'queso' or cheese, and of afterwards making believe that he has feasted like a young Marquis.

The curtain being raised for rehearsal, discloses the whole strength of a very fair company of Spanish actors. None of them bear the conventional air of strolling players; the men are moustached, and fashionably attired, and the women, from leading lady to insignificant super, are elegantly dressed. Apropos of supers, El Marquesito assures me it is no easy matter to secure the invaluable services of a genuine white for these purposes. A white

lady is not to be had for love or money; and when fairies are required for a burlesque, the children of respectable families are sometimes prevailed upon to appear. Male supers are not so scarce; Spanish soldiers may occasionally be hired; and when these are otherwise engaged, a dozen stage-struck youths of good family volunteer their services as chorus, crowd, or army. The important rôles of quadruped and agitated water are filled by negroes, who, in Cuba, are, of course, plentiful as blackberries; but when a real black face is required to figure in the performance, it is represented by a painted mulatto, for Spanish law in Cuba is strict, and prohibits the genuine article from appearing on the stage. The theatre opens four times a week, including Sunday, and the entertainment is varied every night. To-day the company rehearse a local drama, a zarzuela, and a farce called 'Un Cuarto con dos Camas' being a version of Morton's 'Double-bedded Room.' A famous actor from Spain is the star of the present season. At rehearsal he is a fallen star, being extremely old and shaky, but at night his make-up is wonderful, and he draws large audiences, who witness his great scene of a detected thief in convulsions. The prompter is seated under a cupola in the centre of the stage near the footlights, as at the opera, and his duties are arduous. It devolves upon him to read over the part of each performer in a suppressed tone, and to direct their manner of exit and their position on the stage. He is unseen by the audience, but often heard by them, for the actors have only a faint notion of their parts, and cannot repeat a line at night without having it first hissed at them by their friend at the footlights.

El Marquesito del Queso has much to say upon the sub-

ject of censorship of plays in Cuba. A play, he tells me, cannot be acted before it has been first submitted to the censor, who, empowered by government, is at liberty to place his red mark of disapproval over any word, line, or passage which he may deem offensive to Spanish morality or to Spanish politics. There is no rule attached to this dramatic censorship, and each censor, in every town throughout the island, has his own way of passing judgment; thus, what would suit the politics and morality of Havana, might be considered treasonable and profane at Santiago, and *vice versâ*. A capital comedy is often so mutilated by the Cuban censor as to be rendered dramatically unfit for representation.

All Cuban buildings are constructed with a provident eye to earthquake and tropical heat, and the theatre is no exception to the rule. The means of egress are ample and facile, so that in case of emergency the audience may, comparatively speaking, step from their places into the street. On every side are huge open windows and doors, by means of which perfect ventilation is ensured. Fire is also carefully provided against, and there is always a small regiment of black 'bomberos,' or firemen, stationed in readiness within the theatre. There are two tiers of private boxes, and a gallery. The first tier is but slightly elevated above the pit, enabling the occupants to converse, as is the fashion, with friends in the stalls. Both tiers have the appearance of an ordinary dress circle, with a low partition to distinguish one box from another. There are wide lobbies at the back, and an ornamental iron grating in front. Like most houses in Cuba, the theatre is without drapery, the stall-seats and box-chairs, which are cane-

bottomed, not excepted. The interior of a Cuban theatre is barren as a bull-ring.

Despite my intimacy with El Marquesito del Queso, I pay my money at the doors, before I enter the theatre at night, like everybody else; for in this proud country it is considered humiliating in a respectable person to beg an order or a pass. I accordingly purchase two separate tickets; one for my admission into the theatre, and one for my seat in it; otherwise, I should have to stand, like the indigent few, at the back of the boxes. Tunicú sometimes accompanies me on these occasions, and gives me the names and occupation of most of the audience, whom he seems to know personally. For the matter of that, everybody in a Cuban theatre is on intimate terms with everybody else, and there is much conversation between the occupants of the boxes, who are, with few exceptions, ladies, and those of the pit, who are exclusively gentlemen. The señoritas, in low-necked muslin dresses, with a wealth of genuine hair, and with their inevitable fans, form a pleasing frame of fair humanity around the picture of dark coats and white drill trousers in the pit. Their hands are gloveless, and their diminutive fingers are loaded with rings of great value: for Cuban ladies are fond of jewellery, and make a great display of it upon all public occasions. Some of the señoras have brought slave attendants, who crouch in waiting on the ground behind them. Tunicú points me out the doctor's box, and when that eminent gentleman appears late in the evening, I recognise him as the man who saved me from the yellow fever. The doctor, I learn, is strong on that disorder, but weak on the subject of earthquake, against which no West Indian physician has

succeeded in finding a remedy. His box is nearest the principal entrance door, for he is nervous about earthquake, and is ever on the alert when he visits a theatre. Tunicú informs me that an earthquake in a theatre is worse than a fire, and gives me the interesting particulars of such a catastrophe as it happened in the doctor's own experience. It was a slight affair, he says, a mere 'temblorcito,' as he calls it; one wall was seen to crack from top to bottom, some plaster from an opposite wall peeled off, a globe from one of the gas lamps fell among the audience, and that was all; but the panic was terrible for all that, and many were crushed to death in their attempt to escape.

The stout gentleman who occupies that big box all to himself in the centre of the theatre, is his excellency the president. No Spanish entertainment is complete without its president. The curtain may not rise till his excellency has taken his seat; the actors may not respond to a call or an encore if the president is not agreeable, and does not flutter the big play-bill before him, in token of his acquiescence. The box to the right is the lawful property of the censor, who, like most Spanish authorities in Cuba, rarely pays for his pleasure. He is extremely affable and condescending with everybody before the curtain, though so stern and unyielding behind the scenes. His daughters, charming young ladies, are with him, and flirt freely with the numerous Pollos, who come to pay their homage. That stall in the centre of the pit is occupied by the editor of the *Diario*, a Cuban daily paper, whose politics and local information are strongly diluted by censorial ink, and which is, therefore, unintelligible and devoid of interest. The editor of the *Diario* is extremely lenient in his reports of

theatrical entertainments, and on him the manager, at least, may always rely. His contemporary and rival, the editor of the *Redactor*, government organ, is seated in a stall near his excellency the governor-general, who is enthroned in a wide stage-box, and is dressed in full uniform, covered with orders. His excellency is accompanied by an aide-de-camp and half a dozen bronze-faced, heavily moustached officers, all of whom are more or less adorned with orders, crosses, and other military decorations. In the bend of the theatre are the boxes of the English and American consuls; and within ear-shot of where Tunicú and I are seated, is the box occupied by Cachita, her parents and sister, whom we visit between the acts.

But what are those mysterious enclosures with trellis-work before them on either side of the proscenium? Those are special private boxes for the use of persons or families who are still in a state of half-mourning, and may not yet expose themselves to public scrutiny. But these boxes are not always occupied by mourners, whispers Tunicú, in great confidence. There are a certain class, he tells me, who wear a kind of half-mourning, which never becomes out of fashion; these are the half-castes or quadroons, who dare not be seen in public with acknowledged white people. The gallery is as usual devoted to soldiers, sailors, and persons of slender means; and in the extreme background are a few benches set apart for the exclusive accommodation of mulatto girls and negroes of both sexes, most of whom are elegantly attired; for coloured people are scrupulous in their dress on all public occasions.

After the overture—a medley of Cuban dance music and Spanish fandango, played upon ordinary instruments by

black musicians—a big bell, to summon all stragglers to their places, is heard, the curtain is raised, and the performance begins. There is nothing peculiar in a Cuban drama except that no allusion to political matters is made, and that the profane and immoral are somewhat freely indulged in. The comic players perplex the prompter with inordinate gagging, and delight in personalities with occupants of the orchestra and pit. There is much applause when the comic man shuffles through the charinga—a popular negro dance, difficult of performance, and shouts of laughter are produced in the scene between a Yankee, who speaks very broken Spanish, and a lady who speaks Spanish with the approved Cuban accent. It is an enthusiastic and excitable audience.

The entirely new drama is a complete success, owing to the realistic performance of the famous star from old Spain. That gentleman is on the point of breaking a blood-vessel in his effort to impersonate the convulsive thief; but he is saved by the doctor in the private box, who is suddenly summoned to the actor's dressing-room. This interesting incident makes a deep impression upon the sympathising public, and greatly increases the interest of the drama. Then the curtain is lowered amidst rapturous applause, and calls for the infirm player, who is presently led on the stage, supported by one of the company and by the doctor. In the following act, the star astonishes his audience by a vivid representation of a detected thief gone mad, and his private convulsions being still fresh in their memories, many are seen to direct their gaze towards the doctor's box, in doubt whether that gentleman will not be required to administer also to a mind diseased. But all conjecture on this point

is presently set at rest by the acting madman himself, who is duly restored to his senses at the conclusion of the play.

An interval of from twenty to thirty minutes elapses between each act, during which the whole audience rise from their places and promenade around and about the theatre. The ladies betake themselves to the lobbies to flirt, fan, and refresh themselves with ice 'sorbetes.' The gentlemen from the pit are everywhere. Some are conferring with friends in the 'grilles,' or mourning-boxes; some are smoking cigarettes in spacious saloons provided for smokers; others are in the street drinking 'orchata' or 'bul,' a compound of English beer with iced water and syrup. The stage itself is, however, their favourite resort. Open doors give access to that mysterious ground from the front of the theatre, and the pit public is thus enabled to wander into every nook and corner, from the traps below to the flies above. The players do not shun their visitors, but rather court their society, for a friend in front is considered a desirable acquisition, and half-way towards a reputation as 'favourite;' to say nothing of benefit nights at the end of a season. A small crowd of Pollos waylay the 'first lady' as she leaves her dressing-room. As many as conveniently can, enter the leading actor's room to congratulate him on his success and his speedy recovery from the sensational scene. Another party of Pollos chokes the narrow passage leading to the première danseuse's boudoir, and great is their joy when they catch a glimpse of the gauze goddess as she flutters hurriedly past on her way to the green-room. The stage is thronged with these walking gentlemen, who require no rehearsal or prompter, and whose most attractive performance consists in unbounded cigarette smoking, and in

getting in everybody's way. It is a miracle how, in the midst of this dire confusion, carpenters, scene-shifters, and managers contrive to set the stage for another act; and what a scene would be disclosed if the drop were to rise prematurely! Presently a voice is heard to cry, 'Fuera!' this being Spanish for 'Clear the stage;' the big bell tolls, and the audience in due course return to their places in front. The curtain having been drawn up after the drama, a man comes round, like a ticket-collector on a railway, to demand the cards of reserved seats from their holders, and to distribute programmes for to-morrow's performances. Everybody is in turn disturbed and annoyed, for at that moment the low-comedy man is singing a comic parody, in a farce called 'The Sexton and the Widow.'

But there is a graver interruption than that caused by the ticket-collector—an interruption which affects actors as well as audience, rendering everybody within the theatre walls motionless and speechless. Some ladies are seen to cross themselves devoutly, and are heard to utter ejaculations about 'Misericordia' and 'Maria Santísima.' Every door in the theatre is thrown wide open, and the servants of the establishment stand before them with lighted candles. What is amiss? I look for El Marquesito del Queso, but he has disappeared. Fire? The black bombero firemen are in their accustomed places, and exhibit no sign that such a catastrophe has occurred. Rebellious outbreak of runaway niggers? I glance at the military-box, and find the occupants peacefully inclined. Earthquake? I look towards the doctor's box, and observe that nervous gentleman perfectly tranquil and unmoved. Hark! a tinkling bell is ringing somewhere outside the theatre. From my

position in the stalls I can see into the open street beyond, and anon I descry a procession of church dignitaries in full canonicals, the first of whom bears the tinkling bell, while the rest carry long wax candles, the Host, and the sacred umbrella. Their mission at this hour of the evening is that of administering the holy sacrament to a dying man, and as they pass along the streets, it behoves all occupants of houses within the route dévoutly to acknowledge the procession as it passes. The audience and actors accordingly kneel and cross themselves while the holy functionaries and their sacrament are in view. One of the ecclesiastical party enters the theatre and glances hurriedly within, to see that all are in the approved attitude. I am thankful to find myself doing as the good Catholics are doing, for I know that our visitor has no respect of persons or creeds, and would call me to order without the least hesitation, were I inclined to rebel. When the religious 'function' in the street (all public shows, from a bull-fight to high mass, are called 'functions' in the Spanish language) is out of sight and hearing, and the candles at the door are extinguished, the spectators resume their seats, and the farce 'function' on the stage proceeds.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MY DÉBUT ON A CUBAN STAGE.

An Engagement—A Foreign 'Star'—A Benefit Night—A Local Play—First Appearance—A Serious 'Hitch'—Re-engagement.

I HAVE already noted how Nicasio and I have lent our art services at the theatre whenever scenic decorations were required. Our colour boxes have also been in demand on certain occasions when the leading performers were particular respecting the correct pencilling of their eyebrows, the effective corking of their cheeks, and other attributes of an actor's 'make-up.' Whenever an English play is wanted for adaptation to the Spanish stage, the manager—very naturally—'falls back upon' the Anglo-Saxon follower of the divine art of Apelles. Upon one occasion I am required to translate the famous farce of 'Box and Cox'—a farce entirely new to a Cuban audience and, consequently, a great success when interpreted for them into choice Castilian.

One day, application is made to me by Señor Don Baltazar Telon y Escotillon, impresario and first low comedian of the Teatro Real de Cuba, who begs me, as a personal favour, to undertake an important rôle in a new farce which he proposes to present to the Cuban public on the occasion of his annual benefit.

The farce is from the pen of a popular Cuban author, and is called 'Los Mocitos del Dia' (Fops of the Period). The subject of the play is of local interest, with a moral exposing in farcical colours the foibles of the Cuban 'Pollo,' or dandy, whose taste for pleasure and idleness is only exceeded by his aversion for manual labour and for early matrimony. The characters are as follows:—

Teresita, a beautiful young Creole.

Doña Lola, her aunt.

Juana, a mulatto slave.

Ramon, a 'mocito' in love with Teresita.

Don Gabriel, a fruiterer.

Mister Charles, a Yankee engineer from a sugar plantation.

To lend a realistic tone to the last-mentioned personage, the manager has 'secured the services of a live Yankee from the United States'—at least, such is his announcement; but, in reality, the gentleman who has offered to fill the part is an Englishman, and one of 'the famous followers of the divine art of Apelles.'

'Posters,' bearing my Anglo-Saxon name—which to a Cuban ear has an imposing sound—are affixed to the corners of every street, and bills of the play are distributed gratis throughout the town. In accordance with custom, the beneficee has addressed envelopes, enclosing a programme of the entertainments, together with a photograph of himself and a 'luneta' or reserved-seat ticket, to all the known frequenters of the theatre. Those who appreciate the compliment implied by the talented comedian, will assuredly lend their patronage on his benefit night, and perhaps forward twice or thrice the value of the ticket of

admission. The manager is confident of a 'bumper,' and bids me do my best.

To acquit myself with credit is not so easy as Don Baltazar supposes. First, it is necessary to eschew my irreproachable Spanish, and to assume that language as it is spoken by an American of the lower orders, residing in Cuba. During my visits to sugar plantations, I have sometimes made the acquaintance of certain engineers from Philadelphia, who, while the cane harvest lasts, are employed to work the machinery used in sugar making. With these gentlemen before me for models, and with Nicasio at hand, I study my part.

Contrary to the system adopted by my brother-players, I carefully commit the whole of my part to memory, noting the grammatical errors, which are numerous, and the fragments of English which occasionally appear. I am punctual in my attendance at the rehearsals, which is more than some of my fellow-comedians can say. When an actor of the Teatro Real de Cuba is absent from rehearsal, a super or a scene-shifter is called to read over his part until he arrives.

I have considerable difficulty in following the prompter, whose duty it is to dictate to the performer the words which the latter afterwards repeats. Seated in a stage trap before the leader of the orchestra, he is conveniently within hearing of the actors, who upon the evening of representation never desert him if they can possibly help it. But I, who have studied my part after the manner of English actors, could easily dispense with the Cuban prompter's services. His prompting is perplexing, and fills me with prospective terrors of a 'break-down.' Often

while I am in the middle of a speech, my officious friend at the footlights has already whispered the remainder, besides uttering the words which belong to the next speaker. If I pause for purposes of 'by-play,' the gentleman in the trap is convinced that I have forgotten my rôle, and insists upon repeating the missing line, though I expostulate in a low voice, and beg him, by all the saints in the calendar, to hold his peace.

A copy of the new farce is dispatched, previous to its representation, to the Spanish Censor, who, after a careful perusal, returns it with the following foot-note:—

'Having examined this comedy, I find in it nothing which should prevent its representation from being authorised. Signed: The Censor of Theatres—Antonio de los Sandos y Ribaldos.'

In spite of this formal declaration, one passage in the farce is found to bear a condemnatory red mark. The objectionable phrase belongs to Mister Charles, the Yankee engineer, who, in the course of the play's action, is made to observe: 'These poor Spanish brutes want civilising badly!'

Don Baltazar is puzzled, and consults his company upon the propriety—not to say safety—of using the questionable words. All agree that the point is a telling one, and would gratify an audience composed principally of Cubans, who have no affection for Spaniards; and they are of opinion that as no written exception to the play has, as is usual in such cases, been made by the censor, the text may safely be followed.

From the broad balcony of my private dwelling, I watch with eager interest the Spanish orange and red banner,

which, on a certain day, waves over the Teatro Real de Cuba, in token of an evening's performance. If the weather prove unfavourable, this fluttering emblem of fine weather will fall like a barometer; the doors of the theatre will close, and a notice, postponing the entertainments for another evening, will be affixed over the entrance. Such an event is, however, not in store; and at seven o'clock precisely the huge doors of the Teatro Real de Cuba are thrown open.

The performances begin with a stirring drama in a prologue and three acts, entitled 'Flor de un Dia.' The tone of this very favourite piece would, without doubt, be questioned by a Lord Chamberlain, but as it contains no political offence, it meets with the unqualified approval of his Excellency the Spanish Censor.

Before the curtain rises, the manager peeps through a small glazed hole, in the centre of the act-drop, and surveys the audience. The house is full, 'de bóte en bóte,' as the newspapers afterwards express it. His Excellency the Governor, attended by his staff of officers, occupies the big stage box on the left of the proscenium, and there is a goodly sprinkling of Spaniards in every part of the theatre.

Of course I have many friendly 'hands' in the house. The English and American consuls are in their respective pálcos. Nicasio is seated in the third row of the stalls, together with Tunicú, Bimba, and a host of their Pollo companions. Don Benigno, Doña Mercedes and their daughters and friends, are also present; and Cachita and her parents occupy their favourite private box.

Most foreign plays are divided into 'escenas,' and the farce

of 'Los Mocitos del Dia' contains no less than twenty-four. My 'call' is for scene nine, so after the second act of the drama, I go to my dressing-room and arrange my 'make-up' for the Cubanised Yankee. Agreeably to the Cuban notion of American costume, I don a suit of dark-coloured winter clothing, together with a red flannel shirt, heavy hob-nailed boots, and an engineer's broad-peaked cap. Similarly, I apply cosmetic to my hair, which I comb flat and lank; I rouge my cheeks and nose plentifully with crimson colour, attach a thick tuft of hair to my chin, and with the aid of burnt cork give to my naturally round face a lantern-jawed, cadaverous appearance.

When the curtain has fallen upon the three-act drama, my dressing-room is besieged by a host of Cuban friends, who have come to wish me success and to inspect my make-up behind the scenes. All congratulate me on my effective disguise, and promise to assist towards giving me a warm reception.

Nicasio remains with me till the last moment, to run over my part again, put the finishing touches to my toilette and inspire me with confidence.

But now the big bell, summoning all stragglers to their places, is heard, the audience resume their seats, and the curtain rises for 'Los Mocitos del Dia.'

The scene of the farce is laid in the interior of a 'ventorillo,' or fruiterer's shop, in Cuba, with real bananas, plantains sugar-cane, cocoa-nuts, mangoes, Panama hats, and limp hand-baskets distributed about the stage. Juana, the mulatto girl—attired in a low-necked, short-sleeved cotton gown and a coloured turban—is discovered smoking an enormous cigar, and washing clothes in a kind of flat tub,

called in Creole vernacular a 'batea.' She soliloquises in the drawling nasal tone peculiar to her race, and adopts a Spanish *patois* which abounds in abbreviated words, suppressed s's, unlisped z's, and s-sounding c's. After singing the 'Candelita,' a favourite Cuban ditty, Juana discourses upon her master Don Gabriel's objections to 'lo mocito,' as she calls them, and describes their rakish habits.

Enter Teresita's lover, Ramon.

The 'mocito' desires an uninterrupted interview with his mistress, and offers to bribe the mulatto with silver 'medios' if she will warn the lovers of the 'enemy's' approach by singing the 'Candelita' outside. Juana accepts the bribe, which she places carefully within the folds of her turban after the fashion of her tribe, and vanishes in quest of her young mistress.

Enter Teresita.—'Válgame Dios! Ramon?'

Ramon.—'Teresita de mi vida!' (Love-scene.)

Teresita refers to her father's dislike to 'los mocitos,' whom Don Gabriel declares to have no occupations save those of gambling and dancing, and who go about 'perfumed with eau-de-Cologne and violet powder.' Her papa's notion of a model son-in-law is an individual who savours of the workshop. Such a man Don Gabriel has discovered in the person of Mister Charles (pronounced Charleys), the engineer of Don Hermenejildo Sanchez' sugar estate.

Ramon is disgusted with this information.

'What!' he exclaims, 'you married to a "fogonero"—a stoker! I will never consent to such a union—first because of my deeply-rooted love for you, and secondly because of my patriotic feeling on the subject. This is a question of race, Teresita mia. It is war between coal and

café—a fight between brandy and bananas. Yes; rosbif *versus* fufú. Mister Charleys is a bisteque (beefsteak), and I am your tasajito con platanito verde machucado!' (a favourite Creole dish).

The infatuated fruiterer is, nevertheless, resolved to make up a match between his daughter and the industrious mechanic, and, accordingly, brings Mister Charleys home with him.

Mister Charleys, who has fortified himself with a strong stimulant, is waiting at the wing for his cue, in company with the 'call-boy' (an old man in this instance), who holds a copy of cues in one hand and a lighted candle in the other. The call-boy whispers 'Fuera!' as a signal for me to disappear from the wing, gives me an encouraging push, and the gloom behind the scenes is suddenly exchanged for a blaze of gas, and a theatre full of enthusiastic spectators.

Following Don Gabriel, who leads the way, I am greeted with a round of hearty applause in acknowledgement of my effective make-up, and when I give utterance to the opening words, in which reference is made to the heat of the weather, and to the difficulties Mister Charleys has encountered in his quest after refreshment, the house is convulsed.

Some time, however, elapses before I can thoroughly appreciate my situation, and realise the fact that all this applause and laughter is due to my appearance on the stage. I easily overcome the temporary agitation induced by the glare of the lamps and the gaze of the hundreds of upturned faces before me; but I cannot withstand the behaviour of the gentleman in the domed trap. His perpetual prompting, combined with his perceptible

enjoyment of the new pièce, is, to say the least of it, confusing, and fills me with misgivings of a premature 'hitch.'

The play proceeds. I am formally introduced to the ladies, whose hands I squeeze awkwardly and savagely, while Don Gabriel—whom I address as Don Guebriel—sings the praises of Mister Charleys.

Enter my rival Ramon, disguised as a Catalan shopkeeper, in false whiskers, and a tall white hat with a black band. Shopkeepers in Cuba are usually natives of Barcelona, and the object of Ramon's disguise, is to persuade Don Gabriel that he is one of that money-making community. He talks Spanish with the approved Catalonian accent; introduces himself as 'Dun Panchu Defulou, Cutulan y cumerciante,' and offers to traffic with his host. The imposture is, however, short-lived. In a hard squeeze of the hand which I give the sham Catalan at parting, he inadvertently roars out in a good Creole accent:—

'Ay! ay! ay! caramba, suelte usted.' (Oh! for goodness' sake, let go!)

The old gentleman suspects his maiden sister of aiding and abetting the dangerous 'mocito,' and there is every reason for his suspicion; Doña Lola having persuaded herself that it is she, and not her young niece, who is the object of the 'mocito's' solicitations. Deluded with this notion, the elderly spinster facilitates Ramon's visit to the house, and there is a scene in which she helps to conceal him in a huge barrel used for storing charcoal. One of the chief 'situations' in the farce occurs when Don Gabriel, at the instigation of Mister Charleys (whom Ramon

nicknames Mister Estornudo, or Sneezer, from the resemblance of his name to a sneeze as expressed in Spanish), fires a loaded pistol at the barrel and its human contents.

It is during the action of this scene that the questionable phrase, already referred to, should be delivered by the Yankee engineer.

The cue being given, I am in the act of repeating the lines, when the voice of Don Baltazar, the manager, to whom is apportioned the rôle of Ramon, is heard imploring me, from the barrel, to omit the words. Conscious of the presence of his Excellency the Governor, the manager is suddenly seized with misgivings as to the manner in which the expression will be received, and will not risk his Excellency's displeasure. My fellow-comedians, who are all Cubans, urge me to proceed. The prompter thinks I have forgotten my part, and repeats the text—so often, indeed, that the spectators in the third row of the stalls at last overhear him, and call unanimously for the correct version of the play.

'These poor Span——' I begin. The barrel trembles visibly.

'Por Dios,' hisses the manager, bobbing up from the barrel like an undecided Jack-in-the-box—'for Heaven's sake, don't compromise me!'

The audience begin to show signs of impatience. Again the prompter maddens me by giving the text.

Myself (*aside to prompter*): 'Bar—ajo! sir, I know my part.'

Mister Charleys (*very loud to audience*): 'These poor Spanish brutes want civilising badly!'

'Bravo! Muy bien!' from the Cuban party.

Groans and loud whistling from the Spaniards.

'That was well said!' observes a voice.

'Fuera!' (Turn him out!) observes another.

'It was a good home-thrust!' cries the first.

'Fuera ese hombre!' (Turn out that man!) shrieks voice number two.

'Polizia!' The theatrical president rises angrily from his box and summons the police.

The male spectators who occupy the pit-stalls begin to be as unruly as they are at a bull-fight. The ladies move from their boxes to the lobbies.

The censor is sent for by the president. The manager is charged to appear by the censor; and anon Ramon, *alias* Don Baltazar Telon y Escotillon, his face and dress besmeared with charcoal, steps into the president's 'palco.'

'Bravo! Bien!' from the audience, whose good-humour is at once restored by this new and unexpected diversion.

A mighty conference is held in the president's box, and the matter of dispute is warmly discussed with suitable gesticulations. The question is, however, finally decided in favour of the manager.

Order being now established, the president's box is cleared, the actors resume their positions on the stage, and the farce, which proves a great success, terminates happily.

When the performances are over, and I have attired myself in the costume of the country, I join my friends in the front of the house.

Don Benigno and his family congratulate me on my successful début and express a hope that it will not be my last appearance on the Cuban stage.

Tunicú, Bimba and others of my Pollo friends overwhelm me with compliments, and as soon as I am at liberty, they hurry me and Nicasio off to the nearest café, where a substantial supper is soon provided.

Cachita and her relations are equally warm in their praises, and Cachita's father, Don Severiano—to whom I am for the first time introduced—very much rewards my efforts, by inviting me to pass a few days, during the approaching summer, at his coffee estate, whither he and his family are bound.

As for Don Baltazar, the manager—he is so rejoiced at the success of his plan of presenting the public not only with a 'real Yankee from the United States,' but with one of the 'original' followers of the divine art of Apelles, that he induces me to repeat the performance; and 'Los Mocitos del Dia' is forthwith announced for another evening.

CHAPTER XIX.

COFFEE GROUNDS OF CUBA.

Going out of Town—On the Road—A Wayside Inn—A Cane Field—West-Indian Fruit Trees—The Arrival—A Dinner in the Country—The Evening Blessing—Tropical Reptiles—A Farm-Yard—Slave Flogging—Coffee—Tropical Scenery—A Siesta.

MY experience of the Spanish West Indies warrants me in the assertion that a tropical climate has but one season throughout the year, and that season is summer. The months of August and September, however, are favoured with a special season of their own; but the prevailing temperature can scarcely be defined by mounting mercury, neither can it be adequately described. It is during these blazing hot months that the ever-azure firmament seems to blink with blue: that the roads and pavement blister the soles of your feet; and that the gay-coloured house-fronts scorch your clothes of white drill and tan your Anglo-Saxon complexion. The Cubans have a mania for painting the fronts of their town residences a celestial blue, a blinding white, or a feverish yellow ochre: colours singularly trying to the eyes, and figurative eyesores to artists in search of the harmonious. It is at this oppressive season of the year that I would relieve my exhausted vision with the grateful

greens of the dusky olive, the pale pea, and the lively emerald. I pant for a plantation which shall shelter and not suffocate.

The realisation of my desire is kindly brought about by Cachita's father, Don Severiano, who hospitably places at my disposal his hacienda in the country. Thither he himself is bound, with Doña Belen his wife, his children, certain friends and domestics. So I make one of his party. Don Severiano is a wealthy planter, with I know not how many acres of rich soil, where the coffee-plant grows, yielding a couple of crops or so per annum to the labour of a small battalion of blacks.

On the morning of our departure for Don Severiano's coffee estate, Don Severiano himself is in the patio, presiding over the saddling and harnessing department; for some of us are to bestride horses. The ladies and children are to drive; and mules, and carts drawn by oxen, are reserved for the conveyance of the luggage and the domestics. By way of dispelling our lingering somnolence, and fortifying us for the heavy journey before us, cups of strong coffee are handed round; and, with a view to getting over as much ground as possible before blinding daylight shall appear, we start at three o'clock to the minute.

The quitrins—light gig vehicles on wheels six yards in circumference, with shafts sixteen feet long, and drawn by mules bearing negro postilions in jack-boots—lead the way. The equestrians follow at a jog-trot; the extreme tips of their buff-coloured shoes lightly touching the stirrups; their knees firmly pressed against the saddles; their figures bolt upright and immovable. Then come the carts with shady awnings of palm leaves, drawn by oxen with yokes fastened

to the points of their horns. The drivers probe them with long iron-tipped lances, and further goad them by shouting their names and adjective titles. But they move slowly, and are soon left miles behind. In their rear are about a dozen mules with well-filled panniers, linked together in line by their tails and rope reins, and led by a mounted driver with a long whip, who grasps the end of the cord by which they are united, and shouts ferocious menaces as he goes.

It is still dark. The dew lies thick on everything; myriads of frogs and night insects yet hold their croaking concert; and the fire-fly cucullo, with its phosphorescent lantern, darts about here and there, like falling stars and fireworks. A stony stream has now to be forded. Into it splash the gigs; our horses following willingly, for they are thirsty, poor beasts, and the cool spring water is inviting. The roads are, so far, favourable to our march; but we have arrived at a piece of ground where muddy puddles lie horse-leg deep. A bridle road invites, but the thoroughfare being intercepted by brushwood and overhanging branches, it is not easy to effect a passage. Our leader, Don Severiano, accordingly unsheathes the long machete, which he wears like a sword, and hacks him an avenue for self and followers. The thicket is even darker than the high-road we have deserted, and our leader curbs his horse with caution while he lights a taper of brown wax; for the ground is slippery, and abounds in deep holes and unexpected crevices. From my position in the rear, the effect produced by the rays of the solitary illumination is agreeable to the sight. The dark outlines of the riders who precede me, appear like black silhouettes against a

background of green and brown, and nature by candle-light looks like stage scenery.

We emerge again upon the main road, and at full speed gallop after our friends. We fall in with them at a tienda, or wayside inn, at which they have halted. Dismounting from our horses, we assist the ladies to alight from their carriages. Of course I attend upon the fair Cachita, whose agreeable society I enjoy till our departure from the tienda. The tienda is a queer combination of tavern, coffee-house, chandler's shop, and marine-store dealer's. The walls and ceiling are completely concealed by miscellaneous wares. Spurs and sardine boxes; candles, calico, and crockery; knives and nutmeg-graters; toys, tubs, and timepieces; rows of sweet hams, sheathed machetes, pulleys, coils of rope and farming implements; Panama hats, buff-coloured country shoes; tin spoons, preserves, and French brandy. The innkeeper or shopkeeper of this out-of-the-world store is a native of Barcelona—by name Boy—who pronounces Spanish with a very broad Catalan accent. We travellers are his sole customers at present, and as we require only hot coffee at a medio the cup, aguardiente brandy at a creole penny the nip, a handful of cigars, and a packet of paper cigarettes, the profits derived from our patronage cannot be very great.

We are off once more, not to halt again until a cane field stops the way. The growing cane, with its bamboo-shaped fruit, and waving leaf of long grass, crops up to the right and left of us for miles, and terminates in the 'ingenio' or sugar-works. The entrance to the proprietor's grounds is by a five-barred gate and a wigwam, both of which have been designed and constructed by an aged and decrepit

African who occupies the latter. He crawls out of his domicile as we approach, and his meagre form is barely covered by a grimy blanket fastened to his girdle by means of a strip of dried palm bark. To all our questions his solitary response is 'Si, sñor, miamo,' being exactly the creole Spanish for the creole English 'Yes, massa.' Having by this means satisfied ourselves that 'miamo,' his massa, is at home and willing to receive us, we proceed until we hear the clicking of a whip, and observe indistinctly a row of naked blacks, who are engaged in some earthy occupation. A big bronze-faced man, in a white canvas suit and a pancake Panama hat, stands behind them and holds a long knotted whip, which he occasionally applies to their backs as a gentle reminder that time represents so many Spanish doubloons. This is the 'mayoral,' or overseer. He seems to pride himself upon his masterly touch with the thong, for when no black skin forms an excuse for the practice of his skill, he flicks at nothing, to keep his hand in. The sorrow of this sight is greatly augmented by the dead silence; for whenever the chastising weapon descends, the sufferer is mute.

The lawful owner of these lashed shoulders and of a couple of hundred more, has turned out to greet us. His unshaved countenance wears a sleepy expression, but the stump of a lighted cigar is already in his mouth. At a given signal, a couple of small slaves appear, with cups of hot coffee and a tray of long home-made cigars. 'Candela!' Mine host invokes fire, and a little mulatto girl, upon whom it devolves to provide it, presents each smoker with a lump of red-hot charcoal in the clutches of a lengthy pair of

tongs. Daylight is appearing, and warns us that we must be on the move again.

'Adelante, caballeros!' Leaving the level cane district, for the next few hours we are winding up mountains. At every turn of the road, the ingenio we have quitted grows smaller and smaller, till the planter's residence, the big engine-shed, and the negro cottages, become mere toys under our gaze. Now we are descending. Our sure-footed animals understand the kind of travelling perfectly, and, placing their fore-paws together, like horses trained for a circus, slide down with the greatest ease.

Somebody ahead has exclaimed, 'Miren!' We look, and behold a distant view of Don Severiano's 'cafetal.' The path has become narrower, and we are encompassed by short thick hedges, dotted with red and black berries of a form not unlike diminutive olives. I pick and open one of these berries, and somebody observing, 'Que café tan abundante!' I discover that what I have plucked is coffee in a raw state.

'Que admirable es la naturaleza!' sings a Spanish dramatist. Nature is, indeed, much to be admired, especially when you are viewing her in orange groves, where oranges, for the trouble of picking them, hang invitingly over your very mouth, seeming to say, 'Eat me, stranger.' Some are small and green as gooseberries; others are big as your head, and of the bright hue to which they give a name. Next on the carte of nature's dessert are the heart-shaped, smooth-skinned mangoes, with their massive and symmetrical tree. They are followed by a procession of lime-trees, citrons, nisperos, granadas, marañones, anones, zapotes, mamoncillos, and a host of other

fruits with strange shapes and equally odd Hispano-Indian appellations. I grieve to relate that the king of fruits—the princely pine-apple—is far from being the exalted personage you would have expected him to be. Like a bachelor cabbage, he grovels in solitary state under our feet! We play at marbles with pomegranates, and practise tilting at the ring with citrons. Throw into the scene a few parasite and plantain trees with slender trunks and colossal leaves; fill in the foreground with gigantic ferns, aloes, and palmettoes, and the background with spotless blue; select for yourself from the nearest hot-house where specimens of exotic plants are nursed, and you are with us, dear—and none the less dear for being imaginative—reader!

Distant barking denotes that we are within earshot of our destination; and anon a couple of Don Severiano's faithful dogs come bounding along the road towards us.

'Hey, Esperules, old girl! What, and Tocólo too?' Don Severiano caresses them in turn as each leaps to his saddle. A dozen more lie in ambush at the gate which leads to the coffee grounds, and through which we are now passing. The mayoral, with his wife and children, turn out to meet and welcome us. Crowds of Africans pay us homage and grin with delight. We halt in the patio, and a score of half-naked grooms assist us in alighting, and watch and help us at our lightest movement. As it is evening dusk when we arrive, and as we are exhausted with our day's pilgrimage, we betake ourselves to our dormitories without a word. Here we are served by stalwart domestics, who bathe our burning feet in luke-warm water, and sponge our irritated bodies with diluted

aguardiente. A clean shirt of fine linen; a fresh suit of whity-brown drill; a toy cup of black coffee; and we are refreshed and ready to do justice to dinner; to the 'aijaco' of chicken and native vegetables; to the 'bacalao' or stock-fish, with tomato sauce; to the boiled meat, cabbage, 'chocho,' bacon, and 'garbanzos'; to the stewed goat, with accompaniment of yams, baked bananas, pumpkin and Indian corn; to the guava jellies and guanavana preserves mashed up with insipid creole cheese; to the juicy mangoes cut up in slices in the midst of Catalan wine and sugar; to the excellent black coffee, and home-made cigars. These we discuss in the broad balcony without, where, seated on leather-bottomed chairs, we pass the rest of the evening.

The second overseer, with his staff of field slaves, fills the yard which faces us. The faithful vassals have ended their day's toil, and are come to beg the evening blessing of their lord and master. Blacks of both sexes and all ages, stand before us in a row; some with machete reaping-knives under their arms, or bundles of maloja-fodder for the stable supply; others with the empty baskets into which they have been plucking the ripe coffee berry. Their evening costume consists of a loose garment of coarse canvas. The women wear head-dresses of gaily-coloured handkerchiefs twisted and tied in a peculiar fashion; the men have broad-brimmed straw hats and imitation panamas. The second overseer, with his inseparable whip, leans against our balcony with the air of a showman, as each black approaches with crossed arms to crave his or her master's blessing.

'La ben'dicion, miamo.'

'It is given,' says Miamo Don Severiano with the supremest indifference.

Being in the country, and moreover tired, we retire for the night at a reasonable hour. We have to make the best of our extemporised couches, for our luggage and furniture are yet on their way, and probably will not put in an appearance before morning. Some of the guests, therefore, betake themselves to swinging hammocks, while others occupy the mayoral Don José's catres—a species of folding bedstead not unlike an open apple-stall with a canvas tray.

Not until we have fairly taken possession of our temporary couches, do we fully appreciate Doña Belen's forethought in providing many yards of mosquito netting. I have always dreaded a country life, no matter in what part of the world, on account of strange vermin. A shudder runs through me at the mention of earwigs and caterpillars; but give me a hatful of those interesting creatures for bedfellows in preference to a cot in Cuba without a mosquito net!

What is that sweet creature crawling cautiously towards me along the brick floor, looking like a black star-fish with a round body?

'Oh, it is nothing, massa,' says my black valet. 'I kill him in a minute, massa.' Which he does with his naked heel. Only an 'araña peluda;' in plain English, a spider of gigantic proportions, whose lightest touch will draw you like a poultice. I let the 'cucurrachos' pass, for I recognise in them my old familiar friend the cockroach, whose worst crime is to leave an offensive smell on every object he touches. Neither do I object to the 'grillo,' a green thing

which hops all over the room; for I know it to be but a specimen of magnified grasshopper, who will surely cease its evening gambols as soon as the light is extinguished. But oh, by Santiago or any other saint you please, I would have you crush, mangle, kill, and utterly exterminate that dark brown long-tailed brute, from whose body branch all kinds of horrible limbs, the most conspicuous of which are a pair of claws that resemble the handles of a jeweller's nippers. Only an 'alacran,' is it? Son of the tropics, it may sound mildly to thee in thy romantic dialect, but in the language of Miamo Darwin, let me tell you, it is nothing more nor less than a scurrilous scorpion, whose gentlest sting is worse than the stings of twenty wasps. If the brother of that now squashed brute should drop upon me, during my repose, from that roof (which I perceive is of 'guano' leaf, and admirably adapted for scorpion gymnastics), my appearance at the breakfast-table to-morrow, and for days after, will be hideous; to say nothing of personal discomfort and fever. Now, a mosquito net stretched over you on its frame, effectually insures you against such midnight visitors; and, if well secured on every side, will even serve to ward off the yard and a half of 'culebra' or snake, which at certain seasons is wont to invade your bedroom floor at night.

I am awakened at an early hour by Don Severiano's live stock, who hold their musical matinée in the big yard exactly under my open window. The bloated and presumptuous turkey-cock, 'guanajo,' is leading tenor in the poultry programme. First fiddle is the 'gallo Inglés,' or English rooster. Then come the double-bass pigs, who have free access to the balcony and parlour. A chorus of

hens, chickens, and guinea-fowls, varies the entertainment; while the majestic 'perjuil,' or peacock, perched on his regal box, the guano roof, applauds the performance below in plaintive and heart-rending tones. Before I am up and stirring, a dark domestic brings me a tiny cup of boiling coffee and a paper cigarette, and waits for further orders. Don Severiano proposes a stroll (he tells me) through his grounds. Our horses are soon led out, and we bestride them, with an empty sack for a saddle and a bit of rope for a bridle. Better riders than the Cubans I never saw in an equestrian circus, and steadier and easier-going animals than Cuban horses I have never ridden on a 'roundabout' at a country fair.

We come upon a sorry sight at one of the 'secaderos,' or coffee-drying platforms. A young mulatto woman is undergoing 'veinte cinco' on a short ladder: in other words, is being flogged. They have tied her, face downwards, by her wrists and ankles, to a slanting ladder, while an overseer and a muscular assistant in turn administer two dozen lashes with a knotted thong. She receives her punishment with low groans; when she catches a glimpse of the spectators, she craves our intercession.

'Perdona, miamo!'

The overseer laughs, and, turning to his visitors, offers his weapon with a polite invitation that one of us will try our skill. We all appeal to Don Severiano, and, at our earnest request, that humane gentleman orders his mayoral to let the culprit off. Smarting salt and aguardiente are then rubbed in for healing purposes, and the wretched girl is conducted to a dark chamber, where her baby, five months old, is shortly afterwards brought her for solace and aliment.

I venture to inquire the nature of her crime, and am assured that it is ungovernable temper and general insubordination of more than a month's standing.

Our horses are halting on one of the four secaderos, or 'barbacués'—smooth platforms on which the ripe coffee-berry is laid and raked out to be blackened and baked by the sun. Near the secaderos is a circle of ground, hedged in like a bull-ring and containing a horizontal fluted roller, turned by a crank. This roller, or pulping-mill, is made to gyrate by a mule, crushing in its perpetual journey the already baked coffee-berry, until the crisp husk peels off and exposes a couple of whity-brown, hard, oval seeds, upon which are inscribed two straight furrows. There are winnowing-machines, for separating the chaff from the already milled grain. In that outhouse a group of dark divinities are engaged in the difficult process of sieving and sorting. See with what exceeding dexterity Alicia, Ernestina, and Constancia—the black workers have the whitest of Christian names—handle their big sieves. Alicia, cigar in mouth, takes an armful of the winnowed seed from the sack at her side, and transfers it to her sieve, which she shakes until the dust and remaining particles of husk fall like floating feathers to the ground. Then, by an expert turn of the wrist, she separates the smaller and better quality of seed from the larger and coarser; and by another remarkable sleight of hand, tilts the former into its corresponding heap on the ground, and pours the latter into a sack. Constancia is scarcely as expert as Alicia though. The sieve's perforations are wide enough to admit the small seed of the 'caracol,' and she separates the two qualities by the ordinary process of sieving the small and retaining the great.

Well seated on his chesnut charger, Don Severiano conducts us by a circuitous path up an exceedingly steep hill. The trees are tall and ponderous; the leaves are, for the most part, gigantic and easy to count; the fruits are of the biggest; the mountain tops are inaccessible; and the rivers contain fish for Titans. Surely giants must have peopled Cuba, long before Columbus found out the colony! Don Severiano takes little or no interest in the landscape, his attention being wholly absorbed by the small round berries, which may before long be converted into grains of gold, if the coffee crop yield as it promises.

The pickers are at their work. A score of them are close at hand, with their baskets already filled. Observe how they choose the dark red, and eschew the unripe green, or the black and overdone berry. The second overseer, whip in hand, is ever behind, to see that the pickers do not flag. He is a genuine white; but his complexion is so bronzed, that you would scarcely distinguish him from a mulatto, save for his lank hair and thin lips. He volunteers explanation. He points to the big fruit of the cacao, or cocoa plant, and shows which are the bread, the milk and the cotton trees. Learning that I am a foreigner and an Englishman, he offers some useful information respecting certain trees and plants which yield invaluable products, such as might be turned to good account by an enterprising European, but which are unnoticed and neglected by the wealthy independent native. At our request, he unsheathes his machete and cuts us a few odd-shaped twigs from a coffee bush, with which we may manufacture walking-sticks. He exhibits one of his own handiwork. It is engraved all over, polished and stained in imitation of a

snake; and, as it rests in the green grass, it looks the very counterpart of such a reptile, with beady eyes and scaly back. On closer acquaintanceship, I find the second overseer to be a great connoisseur in canes.

It is our breakfast hour, and Doña Belen and the other ladies will not like to be kept waiting. So we return to the barbacué, where the powerful odour of roasting coffee is wafted towards us. The black cook is roasting a quantity of the drab seed, in a flat pipkin over a slow fire. She is careful to keep the seed in motion with a stick, lest it burn; and when it has attained the approved rich brown hue, she sprinkles a spoonful of sugar over it to bring out its flavour, and then leaves it to cool on the ground. Near her are a wooden pestle and mortar for reducing the crisp toasted seed to powder; and a small framework of wood in which rests a flannel bag for straining the rich brown decoction after it has been mixed and boiled.

Substantial breakfast over, some of us carry our hammocks and betake ourselves to the adjacent stream. Here, beneath the shade of lofty bamboos, within hearing of the musical mocking-bird, the wild pigeon and the humming-bird, in the midst of sweet-smelling odours, we lotus-eaters encamp, affixing each a hammock between a couple of trunks of trees. Here, we see nature under her brightest and sunniest aspect, and, divesting our imagination of oil and canvas landscape, arrive at the conclusion that trees and plants are very green indeed, and of an endless variety of shade; that stones do not glitter, save where water damps them; and that a Cuban sky is far bluer than the most expensive ultramarine on a painter's palette.

CHAPTER XX.

COUNTRY LIFE AT A SUGAR ESTATE.

An Artist's Tent—Early Sport—An 'Ingenio'—Sugar and Rum—Afternoon Sport—A Ride through the Country—Negro Dancing—An Evening in the Country—'La Loteria.'

WITH my companion Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú, behold me passing the sultry months of August and September at the plantation of our worthy friend Don Benigno, who, with his wife and family, have encamped for the summer season at a farm-house on his sugar estate.

Our host's party is somewhat larger than usual, consisting of, besides his wife and family, his eldest daughter's intended, Don Manuel, and *his* family. After our arrival, it is found that Don Benigno's premises cannot accommodate us; we therefore obligingly seek a lodging elsewhere, and as in the tropics any place of shelter serves for a habitation, we do not greatly sacrifice our comfort.

Assisted by a stalwart negro, Nicasio and I improvise a lodging on the banks of the river which flows near Don Benigno's country house. Our rustic bower consists of a framework of roughly cut branches, and has an outer covering formed of the dried papyrus-like bark of palms. The interior is not spacious, but it meets all our requirements. In it we can swing our hammocks at night, and

assume a sitting posture without inconvenience during the day. Our implements for sketching, together with a couple of double-barrelled guns and some fishing-tackle, distributed about the apartment, form agreeable objects for our gaze, while, at the same time, they are within our easiest grasp. Plenty of good fishing may be obtained in the deep, wide river which flows at our feet, and our guns may be equally well employed with sport in the opposite direction. As for our more peaceful instruments of art, there is abundant scope for them on every side; and thus we can shoot, angle, or sketch, as we may feel inclined, without moving from our shady retreat, which, during the sunnier hours of the day, we dare not desert.

We rise at a very early hour; indeed, it is not yet daylight when our dark domestic brings us our early cup of café noir and cigarettes. After refreshing our bodies in the natural gigantic bath which flows before our domicile, we dress: an operation which does not occupy much time, as our wardrobe consists simply of coloured flannel shirts, brown holland trousers, Panama hats, and buff-coloured shoes. Thus attired, with ammunition affixed to our girdles, and guns shouldered, we plunge into an adjacent thicket in quest of game; the objects of our sport being chiefly wild guinea-fowl, quails, partridges, and wild pigeons. No game license is required of us in these parts, and the sporting competition is very small, if indeed it exists at all, within ear-shot of us; at least, at this hour of the morning we have the field to ourselves. We hear nothing as yet but the rustling of gigantic ferns, bamboos, and plantain leaves, together with the occasional song of the winged tribe, whose united harmony it is our purpose soon to interrupt.

The silence of the grey dawn is eminently favourable to our sport, and the low bushes which intercept our path screen us from the penetrating gaze of our prey. The guinea-fowl, or 'gallos de Guinea' as they are styled, occupy our first attention. At this hour they emerge from their hiding-places by the score to feed among the dewy heather. We have to move with extreme caution, for the colour of their soft feathers is scarcely distinguishable from the ground which they have selected as a table for their morning meal. Nicasio is in advance of me, tracking a company of guinea-fowls, whose melodious chirp has caught his accustomed ear. They are not yet visible, but my sporting friend has halted behind a bush, and thrown away his white tell-tale panama. This means mischief. The dark-grey clothes and sunburnt face of my companion blend naturally with the surroundings, and, as he crouches motionless on the ground, he, like the birds just described, is barely discernible. I watch him with interest and some impatience, for a covey of large pigeons challenge my weapon close at hand. Their cooing seems to proceed from a great distance, but, conscious of the enemy's ventriloquial power, his muffled music does not deceive me. My companion has now levelled his gun, and, taking steady aim, presently fires. At the sound of fire-arms my pigeons take flight, and as they rise I fire into their midst. My companion now discharges his second barrel into a covey of quails, which had been feeding unobserved within a few paces of him. I take a shot at one of these birds as it flutters incautiously over my head, and it falls with a heavy thud at my feet. The firing has reached the quick ears of Don Benigno's watch-dogs, and anon our favourite

animals, Arrempuja and No-se-puede, come bounding towards us. The sagacious brutes help to bring in our wounded, which we are gratified to find are more numerous than we contemplated. Gathering together our spoil, we remove to another spot, where our performances are repeated, though scarcely with the same success. The sun has already begun to cast broad shadows along the soil, and warns us that the hour for our 'tienta pie,' or early meal, approaches; so we return to our hut, change our damp linen for dry, and join the company, who are already seated on the broad balcony of Don Benigno's house, watching the interesting process of milking cows. Bowls of warm milk are presently handed round by negroes, who bring also new milk rolls which have just arrived from the village ten miles distant.

'What luck have you had?' inquires our host of his sporting friends.

We exhibit the result of our morning's sport, which gains us much applause and approving cries of 'Ay! que bonito. Ay! que bueno.' The black cook to whom we consign our game, promises to do culinary justice to them at breakfast.

We employ the interval which precedes that late meal in a saunter through Don Benigno's sugar works, where some of us are initiated into the mysteries of sugar making and rum distilling. The operations are conducted under a spacious shed in the piazza which faces the Don's dwelling-house, and here the whole process, from the crushing of the newly-gathered cane to the distilling of the aguardiente, or white brandy, is explained to us by our host, who apologises because he cannot show everything in working condition at this time of the year. He, however,

enlightens us as to the uses of all we behold, and leaves the rest to our imagination.

Here is the store-house where the freshly-gathered cane is kept ready for the crushing process. Under that spacious shed is the engine-room in connexion with the rollers that crush the cane. Near us are the tanks or boilers for the reception of the 'jugo' or cane-juice. We are shown the clarifying pans and the coolers in which the boiled liquid, after being skimmed, is transformed into sugar grains or crystals. One of the most interesting sights is the process of separating the molasses, or treacle, from the crystalline portion of the sugar, which is done by the action of centrifugal force. The sugar, still in a liquid condition, is poured into a deep circular pan, which contains a movable drum-shaped cylinder of wire gauze. The latter is whirled rapidly round by means of machinery, and in doing so drives the liquid against the sides of the gauze drum, through the meshes of which the molasses escapes, leaving the dry white sugar clinging in hard cakes to the sides. Don Benigno gives us interesting statistics on his favourite subject, informing us how twelve or fourteen tons of ripe cane may be converted into one thousand five hundred hogsheads of sugar.

The machinery and engine are at present taking their periodical doze like a great boa constrictor. The engineer —a native of Philadelphia—has gone home for the holidays, and will not return till October or November, when the cane harvest begins and his indispensable services will be required. He has unscrewed all the brass fittings, taken out the slender and highly polished steel work, and stowed them away with fatherly care, while he has greased what-

ever is immovable, and then wrapped it up tenderly in machinery swaddling clothes.

Being an Englishman, I am looked upon by the company as an authority in matters mechanical, and my opinion touching the merits of the engineering works is consulted. I accordingly peer into everything with the air of a connoisseur, and happening to catch a glimpse of the maker's name and address on one of the shafts, observe grandly :—

'Ah, Fletcher and Company, I have heard of the firm.'

We have yet to visit Don Benigno's distillery, where the molasses or refuse of the sugar is converted into white brandy or rum. This is a simple process. The raw liquid is first boiled, and the steam which generates passes through a complication of sinuous tubing until it reaches a single tap, where it spirts out in fits and starts into the cold colourless spirit called 'aguardiente.' A glass valve is connected with the tap, and by means of this the degrees of strength formed by the spirit are gauged. The distillers are already at work, as the operations in this department are best accomplished out of harvest time. One of them invites us to test the strength of the precious spirit, which the gentlemen of our party do with their mouths, while the ladies are content to bathe their hands and temples in the icy-cold liquid.

Everybody takes a deep interest in all that is shown by our amicable cicerone, save, perhaps, Don Manuel and his inamorata, who occasionally loiter behind congenial cog-wheels, huge coolers, clarifying pans, and other objects used in the process of sugar-making. The attachment which the lovers conceive for this particular portion of Don Benigno's possessions is so great, that it is with difficulty

that they are induced to abandon it. Their repeated visits to the same secluded spot upon subsequent occasions, only confirms our host's theory, that machinery has a strange fascination for persons of all ages and sexes!

Our morning's perambulations terminate with a visit to the infirmary where the sick people, employed on the estate, are tended, and a stroll through the black barracks, which consists of rows of neatly built cottages, occupied by the Don's slaves and their families.

After a substantial breakfast, which resembles dinner in the variety of dishes provided, some of our party betake themselves to their dormitories with a siesta in view, being incapable of any more active service till the hot hours have passed. Nicasio and I, however, prefer to improve the sunny moments under the grateful shade of our improvised wigwam, in which position we may sketch, fish, or shoot without much exertion: but despite our laudable efforts to do something useful, our pencils drop from our hands, our angling is neglected, and we surrender to the overpowering heat.

I am awakened by my companion, who enjoins me, perhaps because I am indulging too loudly in somnolence, to be silent.

'What is it? Fish or feather?' I ask.

'Both,' he replies, under his breath. 'Hush! it's a river bird.'

'What is its shape?'

'I haven't seen it yet; but it has been chirping among the reeds and long grasses there, for the last half-hour.'

My friend's gun is half cocked in readiness, and presented through an aperture in our hut. After a long pause the

bird emerges from its hiding-place, and with astonishing velocity half flies, half skims across the river, and vanishes between the reeds on the opposite bank.

Bang! bang! go both barrels of Nicasio's 'escopeta,' and both have missed their mark. My sporting friend is, however, determined to secure his game, which is an odd-looking creature, with a long neck and longer legs, similar to a crane. He accordingly fords the river at a shallow point, and in spite of my remonstrances (for a river bird is not easy to bag) goes in quest of his prey. At the expiration of a couple of hours, Nicasio, who has followed the bird two or three miles up and down the river, returns with it triumphantly, but he is himself very wet, footsore, and exhausted.

Our fishing is not so successful as our shooting to-day, and we have soon to abandon both amusements, together with our sketching, for the day is on the wane, and the ladies have come down to the river to take their afternoon's bath before dinner. So we modestly withdraw, and betake ourselves to a neighbouring 'cocoral,' where we refresh ourselves with the cool drink furnished by the cocoa-nut.

Towards nightfall, when dinner, with its indispensable accompaniments of café and cigars, is over, our host invites the gentlemen to accompany him to the plantations of a few friendly neighbours. Horses are accordingly saddled, spurs are affixed to our boots, and away we gallop.

Our first halt is made at a grazing-farm belonging to Don Benigno, and kept by his mayoral, or overseer, a stout, bronze-faced man, who, we are told, rarely moves during the day from a leather-bottomed chair, which he places slopingly against a post of the verandah. After inspecting

Don Benigno's cattle, which consist chiefly of oxen, cows, and goats, we ride over to some coffee estates and tobacco farms, whose owners, or representatives, give us a hearty welcome, and are lavish of their hospitality, offering for our acceptance everything they possess except their wives and families, whom they, however, present to us as our 'servants.'

Our time being limited, we cannot partake of their bounty to-night, but promise to return another day. On the road homewards, we dismount at a coffee estate belonging to Don Benigno's kinsman, Don Felipe, where we remain for an hour or so, and watch the performances of a crowd of black labourers, who are keeping holiday in honour of some favoured saint. Dancing, with 'tumba' or drum accompaniments, forms the leading feature in the entertainments. The negroes, in turn, take part in the drumming, which is performed by bestriding barrel-shaped tambours, and beating the parchment side rapidly with their hands. The strange measure of the dance is so varied and well sustained, that the outline of an air may be easily distinguished. This primitive music is accompanied by a performance on rattles, by singing, and by scraping the güiro. This instrument is, in the country, roughly made from a dry calabash, notched in such a manner that a hollow grating sound is produced by scraping the rough surface with a fragment of bone. The dancers warm to their work in every sense. Only two couples volunteer at one time, and when they are utterly exhausted, others take their place. The partners dance independently of one another, and only join hands occasionally. The women, attired in long cotton gowns and coloured turbans, assume a short,

shuffling kind of step, which gives them the appearance of gliding on wheels, while the upper parts of their persons oscillate, or sway to and fro in a manner peculiar to their tribe. The men, whose evening costume consists of buttonless shirts and short canvas trousers, are more demonstrative than their partners. Sometimes they throw up their arms in wild ecstacy, or leap madly into the air; varying these gymnastic performances by squatting, frog-fashion, near the ground, or turning pirouettes. They get so excited and warm over their gyrations, that their Panama hats, which have been doffed and donned fifty times, are thrown away, their buff-coloured shoes are kicked off, and finally their shirts are disposed of in a similar manner.

Nicasio and I contemplate the animated scene with painters' eyes, and during the pauses of the dance, we mix and fraternise with the swarthy company.

Having expressed a wish to immortalise on canvas a couple of brown divinities, picturesquely attired, our hospitable host, Don Felipe, who has already offered us his country residence, together with the surroundings, including horses, cattle, tobacco, coffee, and all that is his, does not hesitate to add to his list of gifts, the model-ladies that have attracted our observation; so, after his accustomed declaration, 'They are at your disposal,' he promises to have them 'forwarded' to Don Benigno's hacienda without much delay.

The lateness of the hour warns us that we must be moving, so after a parting cup with our host and his family, we remount our steeds, and turn homewards.

During our absence, the ladies and children have been

playing the old-fashioned round game of loto, over which they are intently occupied when we join them.

Doña Mercedes is calling the numbers from a bag, but not in the orthodox way. In order to increase the excitement and confusion of the game, the playful lady invents noms de guerre for some of the numbers. Number one is by her transformed into 'el único' (the only one); number two, when drawn, is termed 'el par dichoso' (the happy pair); and number three, 'las Gracias' (the Graces). Similary, number fifteen becomes 'la niña bonita' (the pretty girl); number thirty-two, 'la edad de Cristo,' and so on up to number sixty-nine, which she describes as 'el arriba para abájo' (the upside down number). All the tens she gives in their numerical form, coupled with the creolised adjective 'pelao,' or shaven, because the ciphers in these numbers are thought to resemble a bald head.

When 'Loteria!' has been at last shouted by a successful winner, loto is abandoned, and cards, in which the gentlemen take the lead, are substituted. Don Benigno proposes the exciting and speculative game of monté, and all the ready cash of the company is forthwith exhibited on the table. Long after the children and ladies have retired, the males of our party continue to gamble over this fascinating game.

While we are finishing our last round but six, a slave enters the broad airy balcony where we are assembled, and approaching our host, whispers mysteriously in his ear. Don Benigno directs a look at my companion and me, and observes, with a smile, 'Señores artistas, your models have arrived.'

True to his word, Don Felipe has dispatched our swarthy models that same evening, so as to be in readiness for to-morrow's pictorial operations, and the good-natured coffee-planter begs as a personal favour to himself, that we will return his property not later than the day after to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVE-MAKING IN THE TROPICS.

My Inamorata—Clandestine Courtship—A Love Scene—'Il Bacio' in Cuba—The Course of True Love—A Stern Parent.

I AM in love. The object of my affection is, I need scarcely explain, the fair Cachita, who lives in the heart of sunny Santiago. She has the blackest of bright eyes, a profusion of dark, frizzled hair, with eyebrows and lashes to match. It is universally admitted that the complexion of my inamorata is fair for a daughter of the tropics, but truth compels me to state that in one sense Cachita is not so white as she is painted. During the day she plasters her delicate skin with 'cascarilla:' a chalky composition of powdered egg-shell and rum. This she applies without the least regard for effect, after the manner of other Cuban ladies, who have a theory that whitewash is a protection against the sun, and a check to unbecoming perspiration. Towards the cool of the evening, however, my Cachita divests herself of her calcareous mask, and appears in all her native bloom.

Since my return from Don Severiano's plantation, I have been a constant visitor at the parental residence in town, and here, in due course, the tender passion gradually developes itself.

For reasons presently to be explained, we occasionally meet at the window of Cachita's boudoir, which is admirably adapted for purposes of wooing, being wide, lofty, and within easy reach from the street. Like other Cuban windows, it is guiltless of glass, but anything like elopement from within, or burglary from without, is effectually provided against by means of strong iron bars, placed wide enough apart, however, to admit the arm and shoulder of a Pyramus on the pavement, or the yielding face of a Thisbe on the other side. An open engagement in Cuba has many disadvantages which an open-air engagement has not. Seated in an uncongenial arm-chair, the conventional lover may enjoy the society of his betrothed any hour of the day or evening, but he may not meet her by gaslight alone, nor may he exhibit his passion in a demonstrative manner, save in the presence of others. Warned by these objections, Cachita and I have agreed to keep our own counsel, and court in this al fresco way. Besides, it is the Cuban custom for a lady to sit before her window, in the cool of the evening, and converse with a passing acquaintance, without infringing the rules of propriety.

Cachita's parents are in the 'comedor' taking their early supper of thick chocolate and new milk rolls. Doña Belen is a corpulent lady, with a couple of last century side-curls, and a round, good-natured face. Don Severiano is a short, shrivelled old gentleman, with a sallow countenance, closely shaved like a priest's, and a collar and cravat of the latest fashion. These worthy people are at present ignorant of their daughter's attachment, and we have agreed not to enlighten them, because their opinions respecting matri-

mony differ. Doña Belen is easily won if a suitor to her daughter's hand can prove his genuine white origin, while Don Severiano has an extreme partiality for gentlemen with coffee plantations, sugar estates, or tobacco farms.

The Spanish language is an agreeable medium for expressing the tender passion; creole Spanish is even more suited to such a purpose, being full of endearing epithets and affectionate diminutives. I am not obliged to address my lady-love by her simple name of Caridad; I may call her Caridadcita, Cachita, Chuchú, Concha, Cachona, Conchita, or Cachumbita, and be perfectly grammatical, and at the same time fond. The same romantic language enables me to use such pretty epithets as 'Mi mulatica' (my little mulatto girl), 'Mi Chinita' (my little Chinawoman), 'Mi negrita' (my pretty negress).

And if these endearing epithets are found insufficient to express my affectionate regard, I have the option of addressing my beloved in such terms as:

Prenda de mi alma!	My soul's jewel!
Botoncito de rosa!	Little rose-bud!
Lucero de la mañana!	Dawn of the day!
Luz de mi vida!	Light of my life!
Ojitos de cocuyo!	Little fire-fly eyes!
Consuelo mio!	My own joy!
Mi merenguito!	My little merengue!
Ojitos de pega-pega!	Eyes that rivet!
Mi monona!	My lovely one!
Mi tormento!	My little torment!
Mi consolacion!	My consolation!
Hija de mi alma!	Child of my soul!

and a number of expressions as choice as those quoted above.

Our conversation is carried on in epigrammatic phrases. I need not waste words by making the long-winded

inquiry, 'Do you love me?' It is sufficient to ask simply, 'Me quieres?' And when Cachita tells me, in reply, that her love for me may be compared to her fondness for her mother's precious bones ('Te quiero mas que á los huesitos de mi mamá'), and when, following suit, I assure my beloved that I value her as I do the apple of mine eye ('como la niña de mis ojos'), I know well enough that these are only figures of speech adopted by lovers in the Spanish tropics.

'Mi corazoncito,' says Cachita, fondly, 'I fear that your visits here must be suspended for the present.'

'Why so, mi vida?'

'Papacito (Don Severiano) suspects something. His friend, Señor Catasus, who passes here every evening, has seen us converse at the window more frequently than custom allows, and he has mentioned it to papacito.'

Old Catasus has a son whom Don Severiano employs, and I fancy that his interest in Cachita's welfare is not purely disinterested.

'Young Amador is a frequent visitor at your father's house?'

'He comes with others in the evening sometimes.'

'He danced three times with you at the Piñata ball, and he walks with you on Sunday evenings in the Plaza de Armas, when the military band plays.'

'You are not jealous?'

'N—no; I am only afraid lest young Amador admires you too much.'

'What of that?'

'Don Catasus has a large coffee plantation, and you know what a partiality your father has for sons of wealthy planters.'

'Are you angry?'

'No, I am not angry, mi tojosita.'

'Me quieres mucho?'

'Muchísimo, pichona mia. Deme un beso.'

'Before giving you one, you must promise two things.'

'What are they?'

'That you will not be jealous, and that you will go no more to the Pica-pica balls.'

'I have been only once this season, mi vidita.'

'My black maid Gumersinda was there, and she says that you danced all night with the mulattoes.'

'I was practising the difficult step of La Danza Criolla.'

'It is danced very improperly by the coloured people at the Pica-pica.'

'Many of my white acquaintances go to these balls, and I am only following their custom and that of the country.'

'Promise not to go again this season.'

'I promise; so, deme un beso.'

Cachita inserts her soft face between the obliging bars of the huge window, and as nobody is passing at that moment, I take an affectionate leave of my 'Piedra.'

My interviews with Cachita at her window become rare on account of Don Severiano's suspicions, and as Cuban ladies of all ages never leave their homes to visit their next-door neighbour without a trusty escort, I have no other opportunity for an uninterrupted tête-à-tête. Occasionally I meet my fair one at early mass in one of the churches, or at the musical promenade in the public square, but on these occasions she is always accompanied by a friend or a relative, and a couple of black attendants.

On the approach of Cachita's saint's day, Santa Caridad,

I favour my divinity with a little midnight music. Those of my friends whose sweethearts are called Caridad, join me in hiring a few musicians and a couple of vocalists. When our minstrels have performed their first melody, the Sereno, or night-watchman, appears, and demands to see our serenade licence, because, out of the carnival season, no serenading is allowed without a special permit from the authorities. After duly exhibiting our licence, the music proceeds, and when a song, composed expressly for the lady we are serenading, has been sung, and a few more danzas have been played, a shutter of the grated window is seen to open, a white hand with a white handkerchief flutters approvingly between the iron bars, and a significant flower is offered for the acceptance of him whom it may most concern.

Tunicú takes a friendly interest in my affaire d'amour, and gives me the benefit of his experience in such matters.

In the carnival season, and on certain fiestas, I visit my Caridad, in company with a dozen Pollo friends, amongst whom are Tunicú and Bimba, and we bring with us a full band of black musicians, bearing ordinary stringed instruments. Our visit is paid in broad daylight, but we are masked, and so disguised that paterfamilias cannot recognise his guests; he is, however, satisfied as regards our respectability, when my good friend Tunicú privately reveals his name. At the inspiring tones of La Danza some lady neighbours flock to the scene, and follow us and our swarthy instrumentalists into our host's reception-room, which is entered direct from the street by a huge door. Then a dance is extemporised. The fascinating step of La Danza Criolla lends itself to a little secret love-making,

and with a partner like the graceful Cachita (to whom alone I disclose myself when my turn comes to visit her house), I feel in the seventh heaven! But dancing at twelve o'clock in the day, with a tropical sun blazing in at the windows and open doors, and a room full of excited dancers, merits some more substantial reward, and in the pauses of the danza, our hospitable host invites us into his spacious comedor, where refreshments in the shape of champagne, English bottled ale, café noir, and dulces, are lavishly dispensed.

Report, which in Cuba travels like a tornado, and distorts like a convex mirror, poisons the mind of Cachita's parent, Don Severiano, and one sultry afternoon, Cachita's black maid, Gumersinda, brings me a billet-doux from her young mistress, which fills me with alarm. Don Severiano knows all—more than all—and has resolved to separate us by removing Cachita to one of his sugar estates, eight leagues from town. For some weeks I hear nothing of her whereabouts, but at last one of Don Severiano's black mule-drivers halts before my door. He tells me that Cachita and her family are staying at La Intimidad, a sugar estate; and after searching among his mule's complicated trappings, he produces a missive from his young mistress. Absence has affected Cachita, as it affects other ladies in love, and my fair creole expresses a desire to see me. Don Severiano will be leaving the estate for town on a certain day, and, if I am willing, a meeting may easily be effected. Saturnino, the mule-driver, who is in the secret, undertakes to guide me to the trysting-place. I accordingly obtain a fast-trotting steed, and follow him through the intricate country, which, after many hours'

riding, brings us to the neighbourhood of La Intimidad. There my guide conducts me to a tumble-down negro hut kept by a decrepit negress, and situated in the midst of a very paradise of banana-trees, plantains, palms, and gigantic ferns. The fare which my hostess provides consists of native fruits and vegetables, cooked in a variety of ways, together with 'bacalao' (dried codfish), and 'tasajito,' or salted meat, dried in the sun. After my fatiguing pilgrimage, I refresh myself with a cigarette and a cup of well-made 'café negro;' I bathe in spring water diluted with aguardiente rum, and exchange my soiled clothes of white drill for a fresh suit of the same material. Towards the cool of the evening, as I sit smoking a long damp cigar before the door of my rustic habitation, the flapping of huge plantain-leaves, and the clatter of horses' hoofs, announce the approach of my charmer, who, escorted by the faithful Gumersinda, has come to visit me in my homely retreat. I assist Cachita in alighting from her steed, and in due course we are seated beneath the shade of an overhanging mango-tree, whose symmetrical leaves reach to the ground, and completely conceal us. We are disturbed by no other sound than the singing of birds, the creaking of hollow bamboos, and the rippling of water. Under these pleasant circumstances, we converse and make love to our hearts' content. The cautious Gumersinda warns us when the hour for separation arrives, and then we reluctantly part. Our agreeable tête-à-tête is repeated on the following day, but as Don Severiano is expected to return the day after, this is our last interview.

On my road back to town, whom should I meet, at a wayside tienda, but Cachita's formidable parent, together

with his friend Señor Catasus, and my rival, the young Amador! Don Severiano is furious. High words pass between us, there is a scene, and I leave the cane-field proprietor swearing to punish everybody concerned in his daughter's secret engagement.

Some days after my return to town, I learn that the black maid Gumersinda, and the mule-driver Saturnino, have suffered the penalty of slave law at the hands of their owner, who has sentenced them both to a severe flogging. Through the medium of a friend, I receive a note from Cachita, to inform me that her father is determined to break off my engagement with his daughter by a more effectual separation than that which has been already attempted. 'If you love me,' the note concludes, 'have me deposited without delay.'

To 'deposit' a young lady in Cuba, is to have her legally transferred to the house of a trustworthy relative, or a respectable family. A legal document for her arrest is presented at the parental house, and if the young lady be of age, and willing to sign her assent, no opposition on the part of her parents will avail. If, at the expiration of the prescribed period, no reason is shown why the deposited damsel should not follow her inclinations, the lover may release his precious pledge by marrying her at once.

In accordance with Cachita's desire, I consult the nearest lawyer, from whom I obtain a formal document, empowering me to deposit Cachita as soon as she shall have arrived at her town residence. I await this event with impatience, but days elapse, and the shutters of Don Severiano's habitation remain closed. I am soon relieved from my anxiety, but am horrified to learn that Cachita has been

removed from the sugar estate, and consigned to the tender care of nuns in the town convent. As my legal powers cannot penetrate that sanctum, I am compelled to await the natural course of events. Cachita is destined to pass six long months within the convent walls, during which time Don Severiano confidently hopes that solitary confinement and holy teaching will have a beneficial effect upon Cachita's mind. Should this prove otherwise, the period for her incarceration will be prolonged, until the fire of her young affections shall have been completely quenched.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CUBAN CONVENT.

Without the Walls—'El Torno'—A Convent Letter — Accomplices — A Powder Plot—With the Nuns—Don Francisco the Dentist.

MY creole inamorata has been already immured five long weeks in the nunnery, expiating there her 'sin' of secret love-making. Nearly five months must yet elapse before she will be released and restored to her stern parent Don Severiano: that is, if the nuns' report of her be favourable; but should the efforts of those estimable ladies prove unsuccessful, and Cachita persist in following the inclinations of her heart, the term of her incarceration will be protracted another six months, when, in accordance with conventual discipline, she will be required to commence her duties as a novice.

Desirous of ascertaining how far monastic confinement has affected my Cachita's sentiments, I propose to sound her on the subject by private communication. Tunicú, whom I consult, tells me that this is not easily accomplished, and I soon find that his statement is correct. The convent is a strong building. At fixed hours the outer doors are thrown open, and disclose a small stone ante-chamber, furnished with wooden benches like a prison. Here may a pilgrim enter, but no further. There is another and a

stronger door, communicating with the interior, and accessible only to a favoured few. Near it is a panelled or blind window, forming part of a 'torno' or turnstile—a mechanical contrivance by means of which articles for the convent use are secretly admitted.

On more than one occasion have I visited the torno, in the vain hope of persuading the invisible door-keeper behind to receive some love-tokens for my captive mistress. Tapping three times on the hollow window, I pause until a voice murmurs 'Ave Maria!' to which I respond, being well versed in conventual watchwords, 'Por mis pecados!' The voice inquires my pleasure. If it be my pleasure to have a missive conveyed to an immured 'sister,' and I can satisfy my unseen interlocutor by representing myself as a relative of the captive lady in whom I am interested, the turnstile rotates with magic velocity, the flat panel vanishes, and, behold, a species of cupboard with many shelves, upon which anything of a moderate size may be placed. Having deposited my letter on one of the shelves, it disappears, with the cupboard, like a pantomime trick, and the panelled window resumes its original dull aspect. But whether my document will reach the rightful owner, I can never ascertain, for days elapse, and no reply is forthcoming. Varying my proceedings at the torno, I sometimes express a desire to exchange a few greetings with my cloistered love, by meeting her in a certain chamber appointed for such a purpose, and conversing with her through a double grating. But the doorkeeper informs me that such a privilege is accorded to parents only of the immured, who can prove their identity; so my effort in that direction is a failure.

At Tunicú's suggestion, every Sunday morning I visit the convent chapel which is attached to the building itself, and is open to the public at prescribed hours. The chapel is a bare-looking sanctuary of small dimensions, and easily crowded by a score or two of ladies with white veils, who come to pay their devotions from the neighbouring houses. At one extremity of the whitewashed chamber is an altar-piece, before which a priest, assisted by a boy, officiates, and to the left is a strongly-barred window connected with the interior of the convent. Behind this window, which is heavily curtained as well as railed, stand the nuns and other inmates of the cloister, who have come to take part in the ceremonies. The responses are chanted by this invisible congregation in a subdued tone. During a certain portion of the ceremonies, the curtain is partially drawn, and the outline of a thickly veiled devotee is discerned as she bends forward to kiss the priest's hand and to receive his blessing. I envy the ecclesiastic, and gaze with eager interest, as figure after figure approaches in turn; but my sight cannot penetrate the dark recesses of the curtain, and the lady whom I seek comes and disappears unrecognised.

I am aroused early one morning by a black messenger, who delivers me a thick letter, which I open nervously, for I find it comes from the 'Convento de la Enseñanza.' The writing, though the contents savour strongly of monastic diction, is certainly in Cachita's hand, and is signed by herself.

'My dream of happiness,' the letter begins, 'can no longer be realised. My conscience, my teachers, and my father-confessor, all persuade me that I have sinned in the outer world, and that if I desire to be absolved, I must

repent without delay. Exhorted by the worthy nuns, I am daily becoming more alive to a sense of my unworthiness, and convinced of the urgent necessity for beginning a new life of holiness and virtue. Guided to this blessed convent by the finger of Providence, I have been enabled, with the assistance of the best of counsel, to reflect seriously over what has happened, and I have now taken a vow never again to act from the impulse of my young and inexperienced heart.'

After dwelling upon the enormity of the offence of making love without the approval of a parent, the writer exhorts me, by my 'mother,' and by other people whom I 'hold dear,' to return her letters, and all other evidence of the past, with the assurance that by so doing I shall accomplish one important step towards the 'termination of the sad story of this ill-begotten wooing' (para completar la triste historia de ese amor desgraciado).

The letter concludes as follows:—

'Perhaps you will receive a parting word from me' (the present document occupies exactly eight pages of closely written convent paper), 'which will put an end to this unfortunate story. You must, then, forget me entirely. Look upon the past as a dream, an illusion, a flash of happiness which is no more. Never must the name of Cachita escape your lips. I shall remember you only in my prayers' (the word 'only' is erased with pencil). 'Fail not to send the letters. And adios! till we meet in heaven.—CARIDAD.'

The bearer of this letter is Guadalupe, a slave of Cachita's father, Don Severiano, and she is intrusted with messages to and from the convent. Twice a week she visits the torno cupboard, charged with changes of linen and other

articles for her young mistress's use. Everything is carefully examined by a nun, before being consigned to its owner; so Tunicú's ingenious notion of conveying by this opportunity something contraband to the fair prisoner cannot be entertained.

Having bribed Guadalupe with a bundle of cigars and a coloured handkerchief for a turban, I obtain from her, in return, some intelligence of her young mistress.

'Have you heard how la Niña Cachita fares?' I inquire.

'Badly,' says the negress. 'The monastic life does not agree with her lively disposition, and she yearns for freedom again, la pobre!'

'Then the nuns have not succeeded in converting her?'

'I think not, miamo. In a letter to her mother, Doña Belen, who has still a good opinion of your worship, mi amita Cachita ridicules the Monjas (nuns), and describes their strange ways.'

'Has Don Severiano expressed his intention to release la Niña at the expiration of her allotted six months?'

'I believe so; but even then, it will be nearly five long months before she can be with us again!'

The most important information which I draw from the communicative black is, that my medical friend, Don Francisco, who is a dentist as well as a doctor, is attending my beloved for professional purposes. I resolved to call upon Don Francisco, and when Guadalupe has taken her departure with a packet containing a selection from Cachita's letters, and one of my own, which I have carefully worded, in case it should fall into wrong hands, I repair at once to the house of my medical friend.

Don Francisco sympathises with me, and promises to aid me in a plan which I have conceived for communicating by letter with my absent mistress; but he warns me that there are many difficulties in the way of doing so.

'The nuns,' he says, 'who accompany my patient, stand like a couple of sentinels on each side of her, and no word or gesture escapes their attentive ears and watchful gaze. He must have more than a conjuror's hand who can perform any epistolary feat and escape their keen observation.'

The allusion to conjuring reminds me of my scheme.

Will Don Francisco recommend to his patient a box of his registered tooth-powder?

He will be delighted to have that opportunity.

'One of my assistants who accompanies me in my convent rounds shall include such a box in my dentist's bag.'

Don Francisco sees through my 'little powder plot,' as he calls it, and hands me a box of his patented tooth-powder, beneath which I afterwards carefully deposit a billet-doux.

But Don Francisco can improve upon my scheme, and staggers me with his new idea.

'You shall deliver the box yourself!' says he.

The convent rules, he explains, allow him to introduce an assistant, or 'practicante,' as he is called. The same practicante does not always accompany him in his semi-weekly visits to the convent.

'As I am about to visit La Cachita for dental purposes only,' says the considerate gentleman, 'you shall on this occasion act as my practicante.'

Early next morning we are on the threshold of the sacred ground. Don Francisco boldly enters the stone

ante-chamber, which I have so often timidly approached, and taps with a firm knuckle on the torno.

'Ave Maria Purísima!' murmurs the door-keeper from behind.

'Pecador de mí!' (sinner as I am) replies the practised Don.

'Que se ofrece usted?' (what is your pleasure?) inquires the voice. And when the dentist has satisfied the door-keeper's numerous demands, a spring door flies open, and we step into a narrow passage. Here we remain for some moments, while our persons are carefully identified through a perforated disc. Then another door opens, the mysterious door-keeper appears and conducts us into the very core of the convent. As we look over the convent garden, which is tastefully laid out with tropical plants and kitchen stuff, a thickly veiled nun approaches us. The lady seems to be on familiar terms with the dentist, whom she addresses in a mild, soothing tone, as if she were administering words of comfort to a sick person. We follow her through a narrow corridor, where I observe numerous doors, which I am told give access to the apartments or cells occupied by the convent inmates. We pass a chamber where children's voices are heard. There is a school attached to the convent, for the benefit of those who desire their offspring to receive religious instruction from the nuns. Music and fancy needlework are also taught, and some of the distressed damsels, who, like Cachita, are undergoing a term of conventual imprisonment for similar offences, impose upon themselves a mild form of hard labour by assisting to improve the infant mind. Cachita, who is a good musician, takes an active part in this branch of education.

At last we are ushered into a gloomy, whitewashed

apartment (everything in the convent appears to be of wood and whitewash), where our guide takes leave of us.

While the dentist, assisted by his practicante, is arranging his implements for tooth-stopping on a deal table, which, together with a couple of wooden chairs, constitute the furniture of this cheerless chamber, an inner door is thrown open, and a couple of nuns, attired in sombre black, enter with Don Francisco's fair patient. Cachita is dressed in spotless white, a knotted rope suspended from her girdle, and a yellowish veil affixed in such a manner to her brow as to completely conceal her hair, which, simple practicante though I be, I know is dark, soft, and frizzled at the top. Her pretty face is pale, and already wears (or seems to wear) the approved expression of monastic resignation.

At Don Francisco's suggestion, I carefully conceal my face while Cachita seats herself between the sentinel nuns.

The dentist, with a presence of mind which I emulate but little, commences his business of tooth-stopping, pausing in his work to exchange a few friendly words with his patient and the amicable nuns. Hitherto my services have not been in requisition; but anon the subject of the tooth-powder is introduced.

Will La Cachita allow the dentist to recommend her a tooth-powder of his own preparation?

Cachita is in no immediate need of such an article, but the dentist is persuasive, and the young lady is prevailed upon to give the powder a trial.

'You will derive much benefit from its use,' observes Don Francisco. 'My assistant' (and here the cunning tooth-stopper, being close to his patient's ear, whispers my name) 'will bring it you presently.'

'What ails la Niña?' inquires one of the nuns, bending forward; for Cachita has uttered a cry, and swooned away.

'Nothing, señora,' says Don Francisco with the same sang-froid already noted. 'Only a nerve which I have accidentally excited in my operation. She will be better presently.'

The dentist desires me to bring him a certain bottle, and with the contents of this, his patient is soon restored to consciousness.

'Keep her head firm,' says my artful friend, addressing me with a faint smile on his countenance, 'while I put the finishing touches to my work.'

I obey; and though my hands are far from being as steady as an assistant's should be, I acquit myself creditably.

Cachita's mouth is again open to facilitate the dentist's operations, but also, as it seems to me, in token of surprise at the apparition now bending over her.

'You will find much relief in the use of this tooth-powder,' continues my friend, in a careless tone, as though nothing had happened. 'Very strengthening to the gums. When you have got to the bottom of the box—just open your mouth a little wider—when you have got to the bottom of the box—where' (he whispers) 'you will find a note—I will send you another.'

Cachita, by this time accustomed to my presence, can now look me fearlessly in the face with those expressive eyes of hers, which I can read so well, and before the dentist's operations are over, we have contrived, unobserved, to squeeze hands on three distinct occasions.

Assured by this means of my lover's constancy, I now

take my leave of her, and, advised by my friends, patiently await the term of her convent captivity, which expires, as I have already stated, in four months and three weeks.

Upwards of three of these months elapse and I hear nothing more of the fair recluse, and during that long interval many strange and unexpected events transpire as to the 'Ever-faithful Isle.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CRUISE IN THE WEST INDIES.

Cuban Telegraphy—The *New York Trigger*—News from Porto Rico—A day in Porto Rico—Don Felipe—A Mail Agent—Coasting—Aguadilla—Mayagüez—Santo Domingo—Sight-seeing—Telegraphic News.

THERE has been a sad dearth of news in the tropics for many long months. The war of Santo Domingo is at an end. The great hurricane at St. Thomas has passed into oblivion. The rising of negroes in Jamaica is forgotten. The civil war in Hayti is suspended for the nineteenth time. Not so much as a shipwreck is afloat; even the yellow fever is on the wane, and not a single case of cholera has been quoted. The people of the tropics are enjoying a delightful and uninterrupted repose, and the elements and climate are perfectly inoffensive. It seems as if our part of the world had sunk into a delicious paradise, and that my services on behalf of the *New York Trigger* would be for the future dispensed with.

I am, shortly, recalled to my journalistic duties by the arrival of some 'startling' news from Porto Rico. An insurrection has broken out in the interior of that island, where the inhabitants have planted what they call their 'flag of freedom,' intimating their intention to rebel against their Spanish rulers.

This is food for the *Trigger*, and I hasten to prepare it daintily, for transmission by telegraph.

At the office of the telegraph, I meet the American consul's secretary. Now, as I know that that gentleman is connected with the *Central Press of Havana*, I conclude that he is upon the same errand as myself. In the interests of the *New York Trigger*, it is therefore my duty now to forestall the secretary, by forwarding my news before he has had time to dispatch his.

The secretary is at the telegraph table scribbling at a rapid rate, and you may be sure he does not slacken his speed when he becomes conscious of the presence of the formidable agent of the *New York Trigger!* Only one instrument is used for telegraphic purposes, so he whose telegram is first handed to the clerk is first to be served by that functionary.

The system of telegraphy—like every other system in Cuba—is supervised by the Spanish administration. Every telegram must be submitted to the authorities before it is dispatched, in case anything treasonable or offensive to the government should enter into its composition. The dispatch being approved of, it is returned to the telegraph office and transmitted in the usual manner. The sender is, however, obliged to pay for his message in paper stamps, and these must be affixed to the document; but under no circumstances is he permitted to make his payments in Spanish coin.

This paper money—which in form resembles postage-stamps—cannot be obtained at the telegraph office, but must be purchased at the 'Colecturía,' a certain government establishment in another part of the town. Thus,

the unfortunate individual who happens to be unprovided with sufficient stamps, is often at a standstill.

By a miracle, my important news from Porto Rico is ready for transmission as soon as that of my rival, the American secretary; but, unfortunately, that gentleman is before me in presenting his document to the telegraph clerk. The latter examines the message carefully to see that nothing is wanting, when, to my great joy, he returns it with the remark, that the indispensable stamps have not been affixed!

My rival is aghast, and offers to pay in golden doubloons; but the official is not to be bribed—especially before a witness—so the American secretary, who is unprovided with stamps, has no other alternative but to go in quest of them.

Meanwhile I, whose pocket-book is full of the precious paper-money, hand in my message, which the clerk accepts, and in my presence ticks off to Havana. From thence it will proceed by submarine cable to the coast of Florida, where, after being duly translated into English, it will be transmitted to New York, and to-morrow, if all goes well, it will appear in the columns of the *New York Trigger*.

On my way to a neighbouring café for refreshment after my labours, I gather from a printed placard on a wall of the governor's palace, some further particulars concerning the rebellion:—

'The Spanish troops have had an encounter with the insurgents, and utterly routed them, with a loss, on the Spanish side, of one man killed and three slightly wounded. The enemy's losses are incalculable!'

This piece of intelligence, of course, proceeds from

government sources, and is therefore doubtful; but all is fish that comes to my journalistic net, so I return to the telegraph office, and give the *Trigger* the benefit of the doubt.

In the course of the day, I obtain the rebel version of the fight:—

'A great battle has been fought between the *Patriots* and the Spaniards, in which the latter were forced to retreat with considerable losses.'

Twenty-three words more for the *Trigger*.

The revolution spreads; the news circulates, and every mail steamer from Porto Rico brings correspondence for me from the agent in that island. Day by day the *New York Trigger* is filled with telegrams and editorial paragraphs about the revolution in the Spanish colony; and that widely circulating newspaper is often in advance, and never behind, its contemporaries with 'latest intelligence from the seat of war.'

At length a fatal piece of news reaches us.

Afraid lest the revolutionary mania should infect our town, the Spanish authorities have subjected the mail bags from Porto Rico to an epistolary quarantine; in other words, all our correspondence is overhauled at the post-office, and any document bearing upon the revolution is confiscated.

The central agent in Havana of the *New York Trigger* is beside himself when he finds that no more telegrams and news-letters are forthcoming, and reminds me, per wire, of my duties. It is in vain to assure him of the true state of affairs, and of my inability to supply him with the dearly coveted 'intelligence.' He will not believe that

my resources for information are as limited as I represent them to be. One day I receive a mighty telegram from him, acquainting me with the fact that a contemporary of the *Trigger* has actually published some 'startling' news from the seat of war!

This fearful announcement is shortly followed by another dispatch to the following effect:—

'If you cannot obtain the news required by remaining in Santiago, leave immediately for Principe (our alias for Porto Rico). If no steamer is ready, charter a sailing vessel. Collect all the information you can in detail, and return without loss of time. N.B. Spare no expense. The "Gatillo" (Spanish for "Trigger") thirsts for particulars.'

As no steamer is announced to sail before another week, I take the other alternative, and charter a small sailing vessel.

I land in due time at Porto Rico. I seek our agent, Don Felipe, and after some trouble, I find him—in jail! He is a native of the village near the scene of the outbreak, and for some mysterious reason has been arrested 'on suspicion.'

Assisted by the English and American consuls, to whom I have letters of introduction, and using the *Trigger's* dollars for the pockets of the officials, I ultimately succeed in procuring the agent's release. Don Felipe then produces press copies of certain communications which he had dispatched by the last mail steamers, but which had been intercepted at the Cuban post-office, and, after inviting me to lunch at one of the finest cafés I have ever had the pleasure of entering, he accompanies me over the town,

where we collect the latest particulars respecting the insurrection.

San Juan de Puerto Rico is a fine city. The houses are three and four stories high, and are constructed after the American fashion. The streets are wide and symmetrically arranged. The roads are all paved and hilly. Every street leads to a fort, a gun and a sentry; and, in some cases, to high cliffs with an extensive view of the open sea. In short, San Juan is a strongly-fortified place. Everything is very clean, very new, and very modern looking. The cathedral is a noble edifice, and the theatre is in every way equal to the best buildings of the kind in Europe.

Crossing an open square, in which appear a number of bronze statues, Don Felipe conducts me back to the café, where we partake of refreshment, and arrange the various items of news which we have collected during our afternoon's ramble over the town.

Don Felipe advises me to dispatch the frail bark which had brought me from Cuba, and return by the mail steamer which has just arrived from St. Thomas, and is announced to sail for Cuba early next morning. As this is by far the speediest way of getting home, I follow my friend's advice, and accept his invitation to repose for the night at his humble dwelling.

The rest of the day and evening is passed very agreeably.

The British consul—a fine military-looking old fellow—invites me to dine with him and his charming family. It is pleasant to speak and hear spoken one's native tongue again, after being comparatively deaf and dumb in that language for nearly five years. It is still more delightful

to feel at home with one's countrymen and countrywomen in a strange land, and thus, when I take leave of my hospitable English host and his family, I sincerely regret, with them, the brevity of my visit.

I rise at a very early hour next morning, and, accompanied by Don Felipe, I take my passage on board the 'Pájaro del Oceano,' that being the name of the steamer which is to convey me to Cuba.

The naval agent of the English mail company, who is a young Cuban named Fernandez, salutes me as I embark, for we had been slightly acquainted with one another in Santiago. Before taking leave of Don Felipe, I introduce him to the mail agent, for by the latter's means I hope for the future to ensure the safe delivery of my dispatches from Porto Rico and other islands. Don Fernandez touches at the port of Santiago at least once a month, and if he can be pressed into the *Trigger's* service, he will be invaluable to that newspaper.

The mail agent has a compartment on board all to himself, and invites me to occupy one of the comfortable berths which it contains. He is in other ways so civil and obliging, that his company is altogether most congenial during the voyage, and before our arrival in Cuba, we have become the closest of friends.

I am alarmed to find that our steamer will touch at other ports before reaching its destination; but Fernandez assures me that the voyage will occupy much less time than it would if it were made in a sailing vessel, especially in the present somewhat stormy weather. In short, if all goes well, we shall sight the Morro Castle in less than five days.

In sorting his correspondence, the mail agent discovers some important missives addressed to me. These, which he kindly hands to me, I find come from the *Trigger's* agents in St. Thomas, Jamaica, and other Islands; and contain some interesting intelligence respecting the projected purchase by the United States of the Bay of Samana, together with the particulars of an earthquake near Callao, a scheme for a floating dock at Kingston, Jamaica, and other topics equally interesting to Americans. These matters, together with my Porto Rico news, I proceed to arrange in concise form, for immediate dispatch by telegraph, on my arrival at Santiago.

Friend Fernandez very much excites my curiosity by exhibiting the mail bags from Southampton. One of these bags is labelled 'Havana,' the other 'Santiago de Cuba,' and as they contain the correspondence from Europe, doubtless letters and newspapers addressed to me and Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú are among the number. But the mouths of both sacks—which make *my* mouth 'water'—are securely tied and sealed, and the mail agent dares not venture to open them, until they have been deposited at the Cuban post-office.

On the evening of the following day we land in a boat at Aguadilla—a small watering-place on the coast of Porto Rico. The village is represented by a row of tumble-down houses and a scattering of picturesque negro huts. While my companion confers with the postal agent of Aguadilla, I occupy the time by a saunter through the quiet, primitive streets, picking up here and there from a communicative native scraps of news concerning the insurrection, which I learn is now very much on the wane.

The business of the mail agent being over, we return to our steamer, where, after partaking of a hearty meal —in spite of wind and weather—we turn into our snug berths and chat and smoke our cigarettes till sleep overtakes us.

We awake early next morning to find that we have already anchored off Mayagüez.

Mayagüez is an important sea-side town on the Porto Rico coast, and is surrounded by the loveliest tropical scenery that I have yet beheld in the West Indies. One long, broad and perfectly level street runs in a direct line from the quay to the confines of the town. Branching off from this formidable thoroughfare are a few narrow streets which terminate in small rivers and streams, across which innumerable little bridges are thrown.

As we are destined to halt at this delightful spot for several hours, we make the most of our time. After calling upon our vice-consul—who is also the English postal agent, and has an office in one of the numerous warehouses which face the quay—and after having partaken of some refreshment at a café, my companion and I hail a quaint dilapidated vehicle of the fly species and drive through *the* street of the town. This street beginning with shops, continues with tall private dwellings, which, in turn, are succeeded by pretty villas, till the open country suddenly appears.

I am amazed to find that for our drive through the town, half a mile beyond it and back again, we are charged the astonishingly modest fare of two-pence halfpenny!

We have embarked again and are off to Santo Domingo, where we land on the following day.

Santo Domingo—the capital of the island of that name —is an antiquated city, with brown, sombre-looking stone houses intermingled with quaint towers and gateways, tropical trees, shrubbery and ruins. We reach the city in a small boat, passing up a long river called the Ozana, and after Don Fernandez has deposited his mail bags at the post-office, we wander over the town. My companion knows every part of it well, having, as he tells me, visited it at least twice a month for the past three years. Acting, therefore, as a cicerone, he conducts me through the Calle del Comercio, which is the principal street in the city, but which has a very dismal and deserted aspect. The cathedral is an ancient building, and has resisted wind, weather, earthquake, and revolution for upwards of three hundred years. The interior is full of interest for the artist and the antiquarian, containing, among other objects, the first mausoleum of Christopher Columbus. Don Fernandez tells me that the remains of the great discoverer were originally brought from Spain and deposited here, and that they were afterwards transferred to the cathedral of Havana, where they at present repose.

On our way from the cathedral we meet a number of coloured officials belonging to the republic; and for the first time in my experience, I behold a negro policeman! We pause before an old picturesque archway where a sentry is on guard. The sentry is a black youth of not more than eighteen Dominican summers. His uniform consists of a ragged shirt, brown holland trousers, and a broad Panama hat. He has apparently an easy life of it, for his musket reposes in a corner of the gateway, while he himself is seated, half dozing, on a big stone!

After inspecting the quaint old market-place, together with an ancient Franciscan monastery called La Forsza, the 'Well of Columbus,' and other interesting 'sights,' Don Fernandez warns me that the hour for our departure is near. I accordingly accompany him to the office of the English consul, where he has to receive the mail bags of Santo Domingo. We have to wait some time at the consul's office, for important dispatches from President Baez. I devote the time which elapses before these dispatches appear, to a little business on behalf of the *New York Trigger*. There is, however, scarcely any news of importance to be obtained. Since the war of Santo Domingo, the inhabitants have enjoyed an uninterrupted peace, and with the exception of a few petty squabbles with their neighbours, the Haytiens, and the projected purchase of the Bay of Samana, nothing eventful has transpired in the island.

The President's dispatches having arrived, we take leave of the consul and the company assembled, and, under the escort of a torn and tattered negro porter bearing the mail bags, reach the quay. Passing through the custom-house, which is represented by a roof and eight posts, we embark in our little canoe, and gliding over the waters of the river Ozana, which skirts the town, reach our steamer.

In rather more than forty-eight hours the Morro Castle is sighted, and in due course I land once again at the Pearl of the Antilles.

The various items of information collected during my cruise being already carefully prepared for telegraphic purposes, I repair without loss of time to the telegraph office.

Behold me safely seated in the scribbling department of

that establishment, rejoicing in the fact that I am the sole occupant of the apartment. From the perfect quiet which reigns in the operating room, I conclude that the clerks are not very busy, and that they are prepared to 'wire' any number of words which I may present to them. I have no dread of competition, at least for the present; for even if my rival correspondents should have received news by the same steamer which brought me, I know from experience, that some hours must necessarily elapse before it can be in a condition for telegraphing.

With a triumphant smile, I seize a quire of printed telegraph forms, and proceed to copy in 'a clear, bold hand' from my notes.

Now to astonish the *Trigger*, and all whom my abundant information may concern!

I have scarcely finished my first instalment of news, when a telegraph messenger taps me on the shoulder and staggers me with the information, that in consequence of a serious interruption in the line of communication with Havana, the operations of the telegraph are for the present suspended!

Then I learn for the first time that a great revolution has broken out in Spain, and that, despite the precautions of the governor of our town, the revolutionary mania has seized the natives of Cuba, many of whom have already risen in arms not many leagues from Santiago! Among other achievements, the rebellious party have cut the telegraph wires and intercepted the land mails.

There are no railways in direct communication with Havana, and the postal service is effected by means of mounted carriers. Thus the speediest ways for conveying

news to Havana are cut off, and there is no other resource but the tardy steamer. I accordingly return without delay to the 'Pájaro del Oceano,' which is to sail for Havana in three hours' time, and finding my good friend Don Fernandez on board, I secretly hand him my big budget of news, begging him by all the saints in the calendar to deliver the same into the hands of the Havana agent.

I am afraid to think what effect this further delay will have upon the *New York Trigger*! Still it may be some consolation for the enterprising proprietor of that newspaper if he find that his contemporaries are suffering from the same complaint.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STATE OF SIEGE IN CUBA.

A Cuban Newspaper Office—Local Intelligence—The Cuban Revolution—Spanish Volunteers—A Recruit—With Bimba—'Los Insurrectos'—At a Fire—Cuban Firemen.

'WE are in a state of siege!' says my friend, Don Javier, editor of a Cuban periodical called *El Sufragio Universál.*

'Y bien, amigo mio; how does the situation affect you?'

'Malisísimamente!' returns Don Javier, offering me a seat at his editorial table. 'The maldito censor,' he whispers, 'has suppressed four columns of to-day's paper; and there remains little in the way of information, besides the feuilleton, some advertisements, and a long sonnet addressed to 'Lola' on the occasion of her saint's day, by an amorous Pollo-poet.

The weather is sultry and oppressive. The huge doors and windows of *El Sufragio Universál* office are thrown wide open. Everybody is dressed in a coat of white drill, a pair of white trousers, is without waistcoat, cravat, or shirt-collar, wears a broad-brimmed Panama, and smokes a long damp cigar.

The sub-editor—a lean, coffee-coloured person, with inky sleeves—is seated at a separate table making up columns for

to-morrow's 'tirada,' or impression. Before him is a pile of important news from Puerto Rico and San Domingo, besides a voluminous budget from that indefatigable correspondent, Mr. Archibald Cannie, of Jamaica. More than half of this interesting news has been already marked out by the censor's red pencil, and the bewildered sub looks high and low for material wherewith to replenish the censorial gaps. Small, half-naked negroes, begrimed with ink—veritable printer's devils—appear and crave for 'copy,' but in vain.

'Give out the foreign blocks,' says the editor, in the tone of a commander.

The foreign blocks are stereotyped columns, supplied by American quacks and other advertisers to every newspaper proprietor throughout the West Indies. On account of their extreme length and picturesque embellishments, these advertisements are used only in cases of emergency.

While the foreign blocks are being dispensed, the 'localista,' or general reporter, enters in breathless haste. He has brought several fragments of local information. Four runaway negroes have been captured by the police. Two English sailors have died of yellow fever in the Casa de Salud. A coolie has stabbed another coolie at the copper mines, and has escaped justice by leaping into an adjacent pit. A gigantic cayman, or shark, has been caught in the harbour. The localista has also some items of news about the Cuban insurrection. The rebels have increased in numbers. They have occupied all the districts which surround our town, destroyed the aqueduct, cut the telegraph wire, and intercepted the land mails to Havana. There is now no communication with the capital, save by

sea. Troops have again been dispatched to the interior, but their efforts have proved ineffectual. Upon their appearance, the rebels vanish into the woods and thickets, and there exhaust the patience and the energy of the military.

The sub-editor notes everything down, taking care to eschew that which is likely to prove offensive to the sensitive ears of the authorities. The material is then given out for printing purposes; for his worship the censor will read nothing until it has been previously set up in type. As many hours will elapse before the proof sheets are returned with censorial corrections, Don Javier proposes a saunter through the town.

On the way, Don Javier entertains me with an account of the revolution.

'The first grito de independencia,' says he, 'took place on October the tenth (1868), at La Demajagua—an ingenio, or sugar estate, belonging to Don Carlos Manuel Cespedes, a wealthy Cuban planter and a distinguished advocate. One hundred and forty-seven men, armed with forty-five fowling-pieces, four rifles and a few pistols and machetes, constituted the rebellious band which, under Señor Cespedes' leadership, had ventured to raise the standard of independence. Two days after, their numbers were increased to 4,000.

'When our governor was first told that a party of Cubans had risen in open revolt, not many leagues from our town, he publicly proclaimed that the rebellious band consisted of a small crowd of "descamisados," or ragged vagrants, and runaway negroes, whom a dozen policemen could easily disperse. In spite of this pretended indifference, he nevertheless thought fit to communicate with the Captain-

General of Havana. That mighty functionary thought more seriously of the outbreak; he was perfectly aware of the heavy taxes which had been imposed upon the inhabitants of our island; of the state of ruin into which many of our leading planters had been thrown by these taxes; and conscious also of the oppression and despotism which had been exercised over our colony during the reign of the lately dethroned Queen of Spain, he doubtless calculated that the revolutionary mania inaugurated in the Mother Country would naturally be imitated in the Loyal and Ever-faithful Isle. But whatever may have been his speculations, certain it is that as soon as he heard of the rebellious movement, he telegraphed to our governor, commanding him to dispatch to the scene of the outbreak as many troops as could be safely spared from the garrison at Santiago. Meanwhile, he himself dispatched a battalion of tried warriors from the capital.

'Before our apathetic governor had had time to obey the orders of his chief, an encounter had already taken place at Yara, in the district of Manzanillo, between some of the rebels and a column of the Crown regiment who were quartered at the town of Bayamo.

'Our governor was now alive to the gravity of the situation, and in due course began to take what he called "active measures." Following the example set by the governor of Manzanillo, he declared our town in a state of siege; and you will now have an opportunity of judging for yourself what a siege in Cuba is like.'

The usual military precautions against assault on an unfortified place have been taken. The entrances to the streets have been barricaded with huge hogsheads contain-

ing sand and stones; small cannon stand in the plaza and principal thoroughfares. At every corner that we turn, we are accosted by a sentry, who challenges us three times over: 'Who goes there?' 'Spain.' 'What kind of people?' 'Inoffensive.' And so forth. The theatre, the bull-ring, the promenade, are all closed for the season. The masquerading and carnival amusements are at an end. Payments have been suspended, and provisions have become scarce and dear. The people whom we meet have grown low-spirited, and the sunny streets look gloomy and deserted. We glance in at the warehouses and manufactories, and find everybody within attired in military costume; for many of the inhabitants have enrolled themselves as volunteers for the pleasure of wearing a uniform at their own expense, and of sporting a rifle provided by the government. The names of those who object to play at soldiers have been noted down, and their proceedings are narrowly watched.

The Plaza de Armas is crowded with volunteers; their uniform consists of a blue and white striped blouse, white drill trousers, and a Panama hat, to the band of which is attached a vermilion-coloured cockade embellished with silver lace. The majority of these amateur warriors are Catalan shopkeepers, and clerks from Spanish warehouses.

Don Javier tells me that these gentlemen, together with the Havana volunteers, represent a very formidable army; and that in the event of affairs taking a more serious turn, the volunteers would take an active part in the hostilities.

'The Catalan shopkeepers,' says Don Javier, 'are even more interested than Spain in preserving our colony under its present administration.'

'Under a more just and humane government, together with the abolition of slavery, these traders would be considerable losers; for most of them are large slave-owners, and enjoy certain mercantile privileges, which would be denied them under a new policy.'

I remind Don Javier that these said Catalans are after all Spaniards born, and that, whatever their private object may be, for patriotic reasons it seems only natural that they should desire to maintain order in the Spanish colony.

'No muy! not a bit of it,' says my friend; 'they are not prompted by any feeling of patriotism. They have been too long estranged from their home at Barcelona, and love Cuba and her rich resources too much, to make that a consideration. I have heard them say that they would take up arms against their own government, rather than that Cuba should enjoy the privileges to which I have alluded.'

While we are conversing, a couple of volunteers approach and salute us.

One of them is my friend Bimba, who tells me that he has enlisted, partly for the 'fun' of wearing a uniform, and partly to ensure himself against arrest.

'Well, Don Javier,' says he, 'are you not one of us yet? And you too, Don Gualterio, surely you will help to protect our town?'

I plead, as an excuse, my nationality.

'Que caramba!' exclaims Bimba; 'why, your countryman, the clerk in B——'s warehouse, is a volunteer; and so are the S——'s from the German house in the Calle de la Marina.'

Don Javier observes that our numerous duties prevent us from joining the corps.

'Car! Que duties y duties?' says Bimba; 'business is slack with all of us now. You, Don Javier, will have an easy time of it, notwithstanding your trade of news-disseminator; for you know, only "official" accounts of the war are fit for publication in your paper! As for you, amigo Gualterio, there will be no more triumphal arches wanted for the present; and no more "monos" (portraits) of defunct people, till the revolution is over, and then I have no doubt there will be more than enough to occupy you and your partner Nicasio! The theatre, too, is closed until further notice, so there will be no more theatricals.'

Leaving Don Javier to chat with the other volunteer, I withdraw with Bimba to a quiet corner of the square and converse with him in private.

Bimba is one of the favoured few who is aware of my connection with an American newspaper, because, for obvious reasons, I have always been careful to preserve my incognito. Now, more than ever, it behoves me to adopt this precaution.

As a blind to the authorities and in order to facilitate my journalistic operations, Bimba suggests that I should join the volunteers. He tells me that our governor has signified his intention to make another sally with the troops, and that he has invited some of the volunteers to accompany the expedition. Enrolled as a volunteer, my friend says that it will not be difficult to obtain permission to follow with others in the rear of the Spanish regulars, and that by so doing I shall be able to 'report progress.'

Our mutual friend Tunicú has not yet enlisted, I find.

'That gentleman is otherwise engaged,' says Bimba; 'his leisure moments are occupied at the house of his uncle

Don Benigno, in the enjoyment of the society of his little mulatto-lady, who is, as you know, Don Benigno's adopted daughter.'

'What! the pretty Ermiña?' I exclaim; 'why, she is a mere child!'

'She was a child five years ago, when you and your partner were the Don's guests,' says Bimba. 'Now Ermiña is a grown woman of fifteen tropical summers.'

'There is some mystery connected with that young lady,' I observe; 'and I have never yet been able to fathom it. Can you enlighten me?'

'Not much,' returns Bimba; 'I strongly suspect—but let us not talk scandal in these warlike times. I only know that Ermiña is a remarkably white mulatto of the octoroon class; that she has been educated like a lady; and that she is the bosom companion of Don Benigno's daughters.'

My curiosity being aroused, I resolve to probe Tunicú on the subject of his affaire de cœur, at our next meeting.

Meanwhile I adopt friend Bimba's suggestion and enroll myself in his corps, and, with others, obtain permission to accompany the troops on their expedition.

Some days, however, elapse before our feeble-minded governor can make up his mind to the sally. A couple of Spanish frigates lie at anchor in the harbour, in readiness to bombard the town if the rebels should effect an entrance and stir up the inhabitants, their countrymen, to revolt. The garrison has been considerably augmented by the arrival of fresh troops from Puerto Rico and Spain, who are quartered indiscriminately in the jail, the hospitals, and churches, to expire there by the score of yellow fever, vómito negro, and dysentery. Meanwhile the besiegers

make no attempt at assault, but occasionally challenge the troops to sally from their stronghold by firing their sporting rifles within earshot of the town.

Several foreign vessels of war are stationed in the bay ready, if necessary, to assist the foreign residents of the town. Among these vessels are the American war steamer 'Penobscot' and H.B.M.'s steam-ship the 'Eclipse;' the latter having been summoned from Port Royal, Jamaica, by the English vice-consul of Santiago.

One day a great panic is raised, with cries of 'Los insurrectos! Los insurrectos!' followed by a charge of mounted military through the streets. It is reported that the insurgents are coming; so everybody hastens home, and much slamming of doors and barring of windows is heard. But the alarm proves a false one; and, with the exception of a few arrests made by the police, just to keep up appearances, no further damage results.

One memorable night, shortly after the inhabitants have retired, the terrible cry of 'fire!' is heard throughout the town, and a report spreads that the insurgents have at last effected an entrance, and set fire to several houses.

Sure enough, from the roof of our studio, Nicasio and I witness what, at our distance, seems to be the burning of Santiago de Cuba! The sky is black with smoke, and from the centre of the town broad flames mount high into the air. Verily, part of Santiago is in flames, but the cause of the conflagration is—as we afterwards find—in no way connected with the insurrection.

A 'panaderia' (baker's shop) and a linen-draper's warehouse, called 'El Globo,' owned by Catalans, have both caught fire by accident. Under ordinary circumstances, the

disaster would not have created any other alarm than that which usually accompanies such a rare event as a fire in Cuba. But having connected its origin with the pending revolution, the town is thrown into a state of extreme panic, and until the truth is made manifest, the greatest confusion prevails. Mounted guards and policemen—armed to the teeth—charge through the streets in all directions, and the volunteers turn out en masse and congregate in large numbers before the scene of the conflagration in the Plaza de Dolores.

Even the foreign consuls share for the moment in the popular apprehension. Their national flags are seen to flutter over their respective consulates, and a few well-armed marines from the 'Penobscot' and 'Eclipse' war-steamers are despatched by the captains of these vessels for the protection of the American and English residents. Passing the British consulate on our way to the Plaza de Dolores, we observed a couple of British tars—their cutlasses shouldered and with revolvers in their belts—on guard at the open doors.

Meanwhile the black 'bomberos,' or firemen of the town, are at their work. But they are ill-provided with the machinery for extinguishing a great fire. Only one engine is available, and their water is supplied in buckets and by means of a long hose which communicates with the court-yard of an opposite house.

The gallant captain of the British war-steamer offers to provide the firemen with an engine and men from his vessel; but the bomberos are able to dispense with this assistance, as their plan of operations consists chiefly in cutting off all

communication with the fire, by destroying the surrounding houses.

If any proof were wanting to show that the despised, but free and well-paid negro, is not devoid of ability and energy, these black and brown bomberos would surely provide ample testimony. A better conducted, better disciplined body of men than the coloured firemen of Cuba it has never been my fortune to meet anywhere. Steady, earnest of purpose, and perfectly free from excitement, they work like veritable negroes, and they prove as serviceable as the whitest of their bombero brethren.

In less than four hours the safety of the surrounding habitations is ensured, and the fire, being now confined to the doomed buildings, is left to burn itself out.

CHAPTER XXV.

CUBAN WARFARE.

Spanish Soldiers—A Sally—Prisoners of War—'Los Voluntarios'—A triumphant Return—Danger!—Cuban Emigrants.

OUR vacillating governor having at last consented to another chase after the rebels, under the leadership of a certain Spanish colonel, a body of volunteers—myself among the number—join the troops on the appointed day and march with them from town.

The Spanish troops muster some five hundred strong. Their hand weapons are of the old-fashioned calibre, and they carry small field guns on the backs of mules. Every man is smoking either a cigarette or a cigar as he tramps along. His uniform is of dark blue cotton, or other light material suitable to the tropical heat. He carries little else besides his gun, his tobacco, and a tin-pot for making coffee; for the country through which he is passing abounds naturally in nearly every kind of provender.

The besiegers have altogether disappeared from the neighbouring country, and for the first few miles our march is easy and uninterrupted. But soon the passes grow narrower, until our progress is effected in single file. Occasionally we halt to refresh ourselves, for the weather is intensely hot, and the sun blazes upon our backs. To

ensure ourselves against brain fever, we gather a few cool plantain leaves and place them in layers in the crowns of our Panamas. Our way is incessantly intercepted by fallen trees and brushwood; but we can see nothing of the enemy, and hear little besides the singing of birds and the ripple of hidden water. Many of our party would gladly abandon the quest after human game, and make use of their weapons in a hunt after wild pig, or small deer, which animals abound in this part of the country.

'Alto!' We have waded at last through the intricate forest, and halt in an open plain. It is evening, and as we are weary with our wanderings, we encamp here all night. A moon is shining bright enough for us to read the smallest print; but we are disinclined to be studious, and smoke our cigarettes and sip our hot coffee. Men are dispatched to a neighbouring plantation in quest of bananas, pumpkins, Indian corn, sugar-cane, pine-apples, pomegranates, cocoa-nuts, and mangoes, and with this princely fare we take our suppers. Then sleep overtakes us.

Early next morning we are called to arms by the sound of firing, which seems to reach us from a hill in the distance. The noise is as if a thousand sportsmen were out for a battue. Our commander assures us that the enemy is near at hand, and soon crowds of mounted men appear on the hill before us. With the aid of our field-glasses, we watch their movements, and can distinguish their dresses of white canvas, their sporting guns, and primitive spears. A body of them surrounds a thatched hut, over the roof of which droops a white banner with a strange device, consisting of a silver star on a square of republican red. The enemy appears to be very numerous, and as he marches

along the ridge of the hill, his line seems interminable. All our opponents are mounted on horses, or mules with strange saddles and equipments.

'Adelante!' We advance to meet the foe. Some hours elapse before we can reach the thatched hut, as our course is exceedingly circuitous. We find the hut occupied by a decrepit, half-naked negro, but our birds have flown. The negro, who tells us he is a hermit, and that his name is San Benito, can give us no information as to the whereabouts of the enemy, so we make him a prisoner of war. The opposing forces have left nothing but their patriotic banner behind them. This trophy our commander possesses himself of, and bears off in triumph. Then we scour the country in companies of fifty; but we meet with nothing more formidable, than a barricade of felled trees and piled stones. Once we capture a strange weapon, made out of the trunk of a very hard tree, scooped and trimmed into the form of a cannon, and bound with strong iron hoops. Upon another occasion we discharge our rifles into a thicket whence sounds of firing proceed, and we make two more prisoners of war, in the shape of a couple of runaway negroes.

Though we have had no encounter with the enemy, our 'losses' are not inconsiderable; many of the soldiers having been attacked by those terrible and invincible foes—fever and dysentery. In this manner at least two-thirds of our force is put *hors de combat.* Our colonel is in despair. As for the volunteers, their disappointment at the unsuccessful issue is very great.

At length our colonel, disgusted with the result of the campaign, orders a retreat. The troops willingly obey,

and are preparing for their march back, when twenty of the volunteers come to the front and propose making one effort to storm the enemy's impregnable fortress. Finding our colonel opposed to such a wild enterprise, these gentlemen, reckless of the consequences, plunge headlong into an adjacent thicket, and thence presently the sound of fire-arms proceeds. For upwards of an hour we await the return of these mad adventurers, and during the interval the firing is incessant. Finally the 'besiegers' are seen to emerge from a distant part of the thicket. When we join them, we find that more than half their number are wounded, and the rest bear between them no less than three prisoners of war! For the first time I have the pleasure of standing before veritable rebels! Two of the prisoners are whites and are seriously maimed; the third is a mulatto youth of not more than sixteen years. They are all attired in brown holland blouses, white trousers, buff-coloured shoes and straw hats. The white men have been disarmed, but the mulatto lad has still a revolver and machete-sword in his belt.

The volunteers are elated beyond measure by their formidable (?) captures, and endeavour to persuade their chief to make another attempt with the troops. But the colonel will not hear of it, and commands the men instantly to retreat. The volunteers obey this time, in spite of their protestations, but before doing so, a horrible scene is enacted.

The mulatto lad, who is only slightly wounded, is bound hand and foot with strong cords, and consigned to the care of the soldiers, but the other two unfortunates, who lie groaning in agony on the ground, are brutally seized by some of the volunteers, who, after maltreating them in a

'shocking manner, stab them to death with the points of their bayonets!

Sickening at the fearful spectacle, I gladly follow the colonel and his men, who are unanimous in their indignation at the outrage.

A two days' march brings us to the confines of the town again; but before we proceed to enter, the governor, accompanied by a staff of officers and a band of music, comes out to meet us. A cart, driven by oxen, is procured, and upon it are placed the captured cannon and rebel banner, the former of which is as much as possible concealed by Spanish flags and flowers. A procession is then formed, and in this way we pass through the streets, followed by the military band, which plays a hymn of victory in commemoration of our triumphant return. The houses become suddenly decorated with banners, blankets, and pieces of drugget suspended from the windows, and the inhabitants welcome us with loud cheers and 'vivas.'

Immediately upon quitting the ranks, I repair to the office of *El Sufragio Universál*, for the purpose of reporting to Don Javier the result of our expedition. Strange to relate, that gentleman has already perused a glowing account of our glorious campaign in *El Redactor*, the government organ in Cuba. The editor hands me a copy of that periodical, and there, sure enough, is a thrilling description of what we might have achieved, if we had had the good fortune to encounter the enemy in the open field!

But the editor has some strange news for my private ear. He tells me that a fillibustering expedition from the United States has landed with arms, ammunition, and a thousand American fillibusters, in the Bay of Nipe, not many leagues

from our town. With this reinforcement it is confidently expected that the rebels will make an attempt to attack the Spanish troops in their stronghold. Don Javier, who is a Cuban to the bone, is sanguine of his countrymen's success. With a few more such expeditions, he is sure that the colony will soon be rid of its Spanish rulers. Then the editor gives me some extraordinary information about myself. It appears that during my absence, *El Redactor* has made the wonderful discovery that I am one of the agents of an American newspaper ; has referred in its leading articles to the 'scandalous and untruthful reports' published by its American contemporary, and has insinuated that henceforth the climate of Cuba will be found by many degrees too warm for me.

But this is not the worst news which the Cuban editor has to impart. The cholera, he says, has been raging in many parts of the town, and innumerable families have in consequence of this disaster and the continued arrests, fled from Santiago. The majority of them had embarked in the first steamer announced to leave the island, which happened to be the 'Caravelle,' bound for Jamaica ; others had taken refuge at their estates in the country, while numbers of young Cubans, who had been threatened with arrest, had made their escape and joined the insurgent army.

On my way from Don Javier's office, I meet Bimba, and from him I learn further particulars respecting this wholesale flight of Cubans. He tells me that, among the departures are Don Benigno and his family, who fled to his country estate. That Don Severiano and *his* family have set sail for Europe, taking with them my creole lady-love, who had been for this purpose released from the convent.

My friend says that their destination is Paris. So au revoir, Cachita mia ; we may meet again ! Quien sabe ?

Bimba then discloses the wonderful intelligence, that among the passengers by the French steamer bound for Jamaica was my companion Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú ; and he hands me a letter which my partner had entrusted to his care. The contents of this document only confirms what I have already heard. The cholera, the recent arrests, the fact that Nicasio is the close friend of the formidable agent of the *New York Trigger*, have combined to induce him to abandon the island before my return. He urges me to follow his example without delay and embark in the first steamer which leaves the island. He himself will remain in Jamaica till he hears from me, and if I am unable to join him there, we shall—si Dios quiere—meet again in that part of Europe where for many years we have dwelt together and practised, under more favourable auspices, 'the divine art of Apelles.'

The first steamer announced to leave Santiago is the 'Pelayo,' and as this vessel will sail for Havana in four hours' time, I prepare for my journey to the Cuban capital. Bimba and those of my friends who still remain in this disturbed part of the Ever-faithful Isle, accompany me on board. Foremost is the editor of *El Sufragio Universál*, who, after wishing me a 'bon voyage' and a hearty 'vaya usted con Dios,' secretly hands me a bundle of papers, containing, among other matters, the 'leavings' of the censor for the past fortnight, which Don Javier hopes will be acceptable to the proprietors of the *New York Trigger*.

I had almost forgotten Tunicú ! 'What has become of him ?' I ask.

Bimba tells me that Tunicú has disappeared no one knows whither.

'Eloped with his mulatto lady?' I suggest.

'No muy!' says Bimba; 'la Ermiña accompanied Don Benigno to his estate. You will probably hear of them again.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

HAVANA CIGARETTES.

Cigars—The Etiquette of Smoking—A Cigarette Manufactory—The Courteous Proprietor—The Visitors' Book—Cigarette Rolling.

THAT the characteristics of Cuba, and the ways of the people, are better observed in the Santiago end of the island than they are in Havana, is apparent to me after my arrival in the latter city. Here I am reminded in many respects of a fashionable European town—indeed, by reason of its modern innovations, the Cuban capital has been styled the 'Paris of the tropics.' Compared with Santiago, Havana offers few attractions to the traveller in quest of 'Cosas de Cuba,' besides its tobacco; and to this subject I accordingly devote my attention.

I am in the Louvre. Not the French palace of that name, but a fashionable café in the heart of Havana. The interior of the Café del Louvre is tastefully decorated; the walls are concealed behind huge mirrors, the floor is of marble, and countless tables crowded with Habaneros and foreigners from all parts of Las Americas, are distributed about the saloon. At one end is a long 'mostrador' or counter, where fancy chocolate, confectionary, and tobacco in all its branches are sold. Here you have your pick of brands, from the gigantic and costly Ramas cigar to

the 'tamaño pequeño' cigarette. But do not suppose that because you are at the birth-place of your choice Havanas, you will get those articles at a cost comparatively next to nothing. I, who from infancy upwards have cherished this fiction, am lamentably disappointed when I discover what exorbitant prices are demanded for the best brands. The cedar boxes, with their precious contents, set like gems in the midst of tinfoil and fancy-cut paper, look inviting; but I seek in vain for a cigar at the ridiculously cheap rate I have prepared myself to pay. I try Brevas, and ask for a penn'orth of the best, but am horrified when I am told that a single specimen of that brand costs fivepence! The Intimidads alarm me; the Bravas unman me; and as for the Cabañas, the Partagas, the Henry Clays, and the Upmanns, I am filled with awe at the bare mention of their value per pound. A real Ramas, I am informed, is worth eighteenpence English, while superior Upmanns are not to be had under ten sovereigns a hundred. In despair of finding anything within my means at the Louvre counter, I purchase a 'medio's' worth of cigarettes—a medio, or twopence halfpenny being the smallest coin current in Cuba—order a cup of café noir, and sally forth in quest of cheaper smokeables.

Crossing the square where the Tacon theatre and circus stand, I wander through the narrow, ill-paved streets of the Cuban capital. At the corner of every hotel, under archways and arcades, I meet with tables laid out like fruit-stalls, bearing bundles of cigars and cigarettes. Here, at least, I expect to find something to smoke at a fabulously low rate. Yes; here are cigars at two, three, and five for a

silver twopence; but those I invest in do not satisfy me; they are damp, new, badly rolled, won't draw, and have all kinds of odd shapes. Some are curved like Turkish scimetars, others are square and flat, as if they had been mangled or sat upon, while a few are undecided in form like horse-radish. The vendor assures me that all his cigars are born of 'tabaco legitimo,' of 'calidad superior,' grown on the low sandy soil of the famous Vuelta Abajo district; but I know what a very small area that tract of land comprises, and I will no more believe in the abundance of its resources than I will in those of Champagne and Oporto.

In my peregrinations, I gaze fondly into the interior of wholesale cigar warehouses, but dare not enter and demand the price of half of one of those countless cedar-boxes, which I see piled up to the very ceiling in walls fifty boxes thick. At last I founder on the Plaza de Santa Isabel, a spacious square, laid out with pretty gardens and tropical trees. Here is the grand hotel where the Special Correspondent to the *New York Trigger* wields his mighty pen. To him and to other acquaintances I apply for information on the subject of tobacco. My foreign friends assure me you cannot get a good cigar in Havana at any price, as all the best are exported to Europe and the United States; unless you prefer German tobacco, of which great quantities are imported into Havana. The natives have quite a different account to give. They declare that the best cigars never leave the country but are easily obtained if you know where to seek them; and they refer me to the warehouses. Every one whom I consult graciously offers me a few specimens from his own particular cigar-case; and as in Cuba it is considered an offence to refuse a man's tobacco, I am soon

in possession of a goodly stock, which I calculate will last me for the next eight and forty hours at least.

A singular etiquette is observed all over Cuba with respect to smoking, which a rough Britisher does not always appreciate. An utter stranger is at liberty to stop you in the middle of the street to beg the favour of your 'candela,' or light from your cigar. If you are polite, you will immediately hand him your weed, with the ashes carefully shaken off, and the lighted end conveniently pointed in his direction. Part of your fire having been successfully transferred to his cigar, the stranger is bound to return your property, presenting it, by a dexterous turn of the wrist, with the mouth end towards you; an operation which requires no little practice, as it is accompanied with a downward jerk to express deep obligation. If, after this, you are inclined to abandon your cigar for a fresh one, you may not do so in the stranger's presence, but wait till he has disappeared. There is a sort of smoking freemasonry, too, between Cubans all over the world. A Cuban recognises a compatriot anywhere, by the manner in which he screws up his cigarette, holds it, and offers or accepts a light.

Advised by a friend who is a great smoker, I give up my cigar investigations, and devote my attention to the humbler cigarette. With this object in view, I ramble down the narrow 'calles' or streets of St. Ignacio, del Obispo, and de Cuba. At every twelfth house which I pass is a small shop where only the article I seek is sold. In the first-mentioned calle is the 'deposito' of the far-famed Cabañas cigarette; in the second, the Gallito and Honradez stores. I visit the latter, which holds the highest

reputation, and take an inventory of the stock. I am shown an endless variety of cigarettes at comparatively insignificant prices ; a packet of twenty-six of those mostly in vogue costing only a silver medio, or twopence halfpenny English. There are innumerable sizes, from the smallest named Acacias, to the biggest, or tamaño mayor, called Grandifloras. The floor of the shop is sanded with burnt cigarette ends, looking like exhausted cartridges, and the pavement without is peppered with their fragments. Every man or responsible child whom I pass has a little tube of smoking paper between his lips, and glancing in at an open restaurant, I observe a group of feeders, each of whom has a cigarette stuck behind his ear like a pen.

At last I pause before the imposing factory of Louis Susini and Son, situated in a little plaza in the Calle de Cuba. It is here that the best cigarettes, popularly known as Honradez, are manufactured. The exterior of the building, with its marble columns reminding one of a Genoese palace, is worthy of attention. Above the grand entrance is the Honradez figure of Justice, bearing the famous motto : 'Los hechos me justificarán' (my deeds will justify me). But there is much to be seen within ; and as a party of half a dozen ladies and gentlemen are about to enter, I join them and unite with them in begging permission of the proprietor to inspect the works. One of the firm soon appears, and after a polite greeting, kindly appoints an assistant to show us over the manufactory. We are told that everything in connection with cigarette making, except the actual growing of the tobacco, takes place within these extensive premises, and are forewarned

that a long afternoon is necessary to see everything to our satisfaction.

Before we begin, we are politely requested to affix our signatures in a ledger provided for visitors to the establishment; and having obeyed, copies of our autographs are made on slips of paper, and, by a mechanical contrivance in the wall, these are dispatched for some mysterious purpose to the regions above. At the suggestion of the cicerone, we follow our names; not by the same means, however, but by winding staircases and intricate passages. Before starting, we peep into the engine-room to glance at the steam power which works the machinery required in the different departments. The first ascent brings us to spacious store-rooms, where loose cigarettes, and those already packed in bundles, are kept. The walls are literally papered with cigarettes in wheels, which look like complicated fireworks. As we move from one wheel to another, we are invited to help ourselves to, and test, the different qualities, which some of us accordingly do in wine-tasting fashion; taking a couple of whiffs from each sample and flinging the rest in the dust. Further on, we come to a small apartment where the operation of sorting the labels for enveloping each packet of twenty cigarettes, takes place. The labels are fresh from the printers; a workman is standing before a round movable table, and as this revolves, he drops them into little boxes belonging to their respective patterns. Each label is stamped with the Honradez figure of Justice, accompanied either by a charade, a comic verse, a piece of dance music on a small scale, an illuminated coat of arms, or a monogram pattern for Berlin wool-work. Some are adorned with artistic

designs of a superior order, such as coloured landscapes, groups of figures, or photographs of eminent persons.

Another ascent, and we are in the stationery department. It seems odd to examine large sheets and thick reams of paper, which we have been accustomed to see only in the form of cigarette books or tubes of small dimensions. A wonderful variety of rice and other paper is before us. There are two or three qualities of white, and endless shades of brown and yellow. Some are lightly tinted as the complexion of a half-caste; others are quadroon-hued, or of a yellow-brown mulatto-colour. We are shown medicated and scented papers. The first of these, called pectoral paper, is recommended by the faculty to persons with weak chests; the last, when ignited, gives out an agreeable perfume.

Yet another floor, and we are introduced into a long chamber with rows of long tables, at which a hundred Chinese workmen are engaged in counting the already twisted cigarettes into bundles of twenty-six, and enveloping them in their ornamental labels or covers. To accomplish this operation with necessary speed, much practice and dexterity in the handling is required. The coolies—a thousand of whom are employed on the establishment—are, however, great adepts at the art, and patient and plodding as beasts of burthen. But among the celestials there is one master-hand who distinguishes himself above all the others by his superior skill. Piles of loose cigarettes and gummed labels are before him. Into the former he digs his dexterous fingers, and he knows by the feel alone whether he has the prescribed twenty-six within his grasp. By a peculiar shake he

humours the handful into its tubular form, and with another movement wraps it lightly in a paper cover, which he leaves open at one end and neatly tucks in at the other. He is so rapid in his work, that we can scarcely follow him with our eyes, and the whole performance, from beginning to end, looks to us like a conjuring trick. Our guide tells us how many thousands of packets per day are in this way completed by these useful coolies.

'Arriba!' Another flight leads to the 'picadura' department, where tobacco leaves are prepared for cigarette making. The aspect on all sides reminds us of a room in a Manchester factory. We wade carefully through a maze of busy machinery. There are huge contrivances for pressing tobacco into solid cakes hard as brickbats; ingenious apparatus for chopping these cakes into various sized grains of 'picadura' or tobacco cuttings; horizontal and vertical tramways for forwarding the latter to their respective compartments. Near us is a winnowing chamber for separating particles of dust from the newly cut picadura. We enter by a spring door which closes after us with a bang, and everybody is immediately seized with a violent fit of sneezing. Particles of escaping tobacco dust float in the air and tickle our olfactories. We are actually standing within a huge snuff-box! After inhaling a wholesale pinch of this powder, which leaves us sneezing for the next quarter of an hour, we clamber to the heights of the establishment, and find ourselves in the printing and paper cutting departments. Here artists are engaged in preparing lithographic stones and wood blocks with various picturesque designs for cigarette labels. Gilders are illuminating labels, and cutters are shaping paper into

their cigarette and label sizes. Further on are printing offices, where all the letterpress and lithography required in the establishment is accomplished. This is far from an insignificant item in the manufactory, for, besides the pictorial and letterpress covers, there are the Honradez advertisements to print; circulars, pamphlets, together with dedicatory dance music, and an occasional local newspaper. We linger lovingly about this interesting department, and, before we leave, the foreman of the printing office presents each lady member of our party with a piece of Cuban dance music, upon the cover of which is printed a few words of dedication, accompanied by the lady's own name in full. Whilst wondering at the magic by which this mark of attention has been quietly accomplished, we descend to the ground floor, and are again met by the courteous proprietor, who presents each gentleman visitor with a newly-made packet of cigarettes upon which, lo! and behold! are our names. It is pleasing to see one's name in print, and when it is witnessed on an ordinary Havana cigarette packet, the charm is greatly augmented.

Before taking leave of our civil host, we are invited to comment upon what we have seen, in the visitors' book, and you may be sure that our observations are not unfavourable to the courteous proprietor and his interesting exhibition. Susini & Son have published a thick pamphlet containing a list of names and remarks of distinguished visitors to his establishment. It is a curious work in its way, for the epigrammatic effusions are varied, amusing, and composed in at least half a dozen languages. Some of the authors have chosen a poetic style of commentary, while others content themselves with matter-of-fact prose. A well-

known signature is here and there recognisable among these cosmopolitan productions. A famous Italian opera star has rhymed in her native lingo; a popular French acrobat—possibly one of a company of strolling equestrians—has immortalised himself in Parisian heroics. M. Pianatowsky, the Polish fiddler, has scrawled something incomprehensible in Russian or Arabic—no matter which; while Mein Herr Van Trinkenfeld comes out strong in double Dutch. Need I add that the immortal Smith of London is in great force in the book, or that his Queen's English is worthy of his world-wide reputation?

We are in the act of quitting the Honradez establishment, when it suddenly occurs to one of us that, after all that has been said and seen, we have failed to watch a cigarette in actual process of manufacture. What! have we presided at a performance of 'Hamlet' with the hero omitted; or are the component parts of cigarettes planted in the ground to sprout out ready-made like radishes?

I return and ask for information on this subject.

'Perdonen, ustedes,' says our hospitable friend, 'I had forgotten to tell you that our cigarrillos are rolled by the presidiarios.'

What's a 'presidiario'? A 'presidiario' is a convict, and convicts in Cuba are sentenced to eternal cigarette-making in lieu of oakum-picking. The government contract with the manufacturers for this purpose, and—voilà tout!

Anxious to 'sit out' the whole cigarette performance to the very last act, I ask and obtain permission to visit the town jail. In one of the stone apartments of this well-regulated building are groups of convicts dressed in white blouses and loose trousers of coarse canvas. Amongst

them are Africans, Congos, mulattoes of many shades, Chinese—Chow-chows as they are called—and sun-burnt whites, who are principally insubordinate Spanish soldiers and sailors. Each has a heavy chain dangling from his waist and attached to his ankle, wears a broad-brimmed straw hat of his own manufacture, and incessantly smokes. Before him is a wooden box filled with picadura and small squares of tissue paper. Great nicety is required to roll a cigarette after the approved fashion; the strength or mildness of the tobacco being in a great measure influenced by the way the grains are more or less compressed. A smoker of course finds a tightly-twisted cigarette more difficult to draw than a loosely twisted one.

The presidiario does not seem to object to his hard labour, but doubtless prefers it to other kinds of perpetual rolling on a wheel. He employs no sticky element to secure the edges of his cigarette, but tucks the ends neatly in, by means of a pointed thimble which he wears on his forefinger.

Ponder well over this, ye Havana cigarette smokers! and when next you indulge in a whiff from your favourite luxury, remember that a pickpocket has had his hand on your picadura!

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MULATTO GIRL.

An Obscure Birth—Bondage—A Bad Master—A Good God-Father—A Cuban Christening—Anomaly of Slavery—A White Lover—Rivals—An Important Event.

My contemplated departure for New York is for many days postponed by the unexpected meeting with Don Benigno's family, who, under extraordinary circumstances presently to be related, have recently arrived in the Havana.

My old friends are also bound for the great American city; but at present they are full of preparations for the approaching marriage between Don Benigno's eldest daughter, Paquita and the young Spanish officer, Don Manuel. The latter has lately received a military appointment in the Cuban capital, and as he contemplates residing there with his future bride, Don Benigno is anxious that the wedding shall take place with as little delay as possible.

Before that event, and before Don Benigno and the rest of his family leave with me for New York, I am made acquainted with the fact, that another marriage will be shortly celebrated in the Don's family, and that the

betrothed lady is no other than Don Benigno's adopted daughter, the fair Ermiña!

Don Benigno tells me that for certain reasons this wedding will not take place in the Ever-faithful Isle. What those reasons are, and how my curiosity respecting the past of the pretty mulatto girl is at last gratified, will appear in the following brief narrative, which, as the matter contained in it was chiefly derived from the young lady herself, I propose to repeat as nearly as possible in her own words.

I was bought and paid for before I was born.

My own mother bargained for, and finally secured me, for the sum of twenty-five dollars. A kind of speculative interest was attached to my nativity. Had my sale not been effected previous to my appearance in the world, I should have become the property of my mother's master, who, in accordance with the laws of serfdom, might then dispose of me, if he pleased, at a rate far exceeding my mother's slender savings; and, if nature had destined me for a healthy boy instead of a girl, my value would have been still greater.

My mother was a slave belonging to a wealthy coffee-planter. Of my father I know little, save that he was a white man, and that being a professed gambler and deeply in debt, he disappeared from Cuba shortly before I was ushered into the world. His flight concerned no one more than my mother, for he had promised to purchase her liberty for a thousand dollars, which was the price demanded by her owner.

There was no world to censure my parent for the trouble

she had brought upon herself, because, in a slave-country, little importance is attached to such a common occurrence as the birth of a mulatto. My mother's master would have exhibited a similar indifference, if, indeed, he would not have rejoiced at the event—for it added a few dollars to his exchequer—were it not for the fact that Don Vicente had a secret motive for great displeasure. His slave was a mulatto, belonging to the fair class known as quadroons. My mother was a comely specimen of her race, and Don Vicente, being well aware of this, had his own reasons for qualifying her conduct as an act of disobedience. This act he determined should receive punishment, and accordingly, when his human property was convalescent, she was removed, with her infant, to one of Don Vicente's estates, and there cruelly flogged!

You may be sure that this severe treatment did not increase my mother's affection for Don Vicente, and, in spite of his dreadful threat to employ his slave as a common coffee-picker—which, for a mulatto, accustomed to the luxuries of town life, is worse than sending her to the galleys—my mother remained true to herself.

Finding menaces of no avail, and afraid of disturbing his domestic tranquillity, Don Vicente abandoned his purpose and advertised his human property for hire at so much per month. In its way, this was a sore trial for my dear parent, for although she heartily loathed her master, she was greatly attached to his family, at whose hands she had known only kindness and humanity. Her new master might prove to be as bad as, or even worse than, her owner, and such a prospect was far from pleasant. She was, however, agreeably disappointed.

Don Benigno responded to the advertisement, and would have purchased my mother outright, but the times were critical, and the worthy gentleman could not afford the exorbitant price demanded for her. He, however, agreed to hire my parent, who was forthwith removed, with her free-born child, to her new habitation.

Don Benigno was of course the kindest of masters; in proof of which, his first act, after procuring my mother's temporary release, was to interest himself in her child's baptism. For this purpose, he ordered that every formality connected with this ceremony should be rigidly observed. He himself officiated as godfather, and, in accordance with custom, invited my mother's relatives and friends to be present at the festivities, which were to be held at a small farm on one of his estates. As is usual on such occasions, my generous godfather sent a 'baptismal token' to every guest. The nearest relatives received an 'escudo de oro,' or two-dollar piece. The next of kin were presented with pesetas, while the friends were favoured with silver medios. Each token was pierced with a 'lucky' hole, to which was attached a piece of coloured ribbon, with my name and the date of my birth printed in gold letters on either side. The ceremony of christening being over, Don Benigno gave a grand banquet and a ball, at his farm-house, to which all the farmers and white country people in the neighbourhood were invited.

My kind godfather was in the habit of investing a 'doblon' of four dollars every month in the Havana lottery; and he promised that if he should succeed in drawing a prize, he would devote part of the amount to the purchase of my mother. But no such good fortune ever happened

to the worthy gentleman, although, upon more than one occasion, he expended a whole 'onza' in tickets.

Nothing worthy of note transpired during the early years of my childhood. My health was all that could be desired after my teething—an operation whose successful issue, it was confidently believed, was due to the bone necklace which I wore from my birth, and which the good people of my country consider acts as a charm against the evils imminent to infancy.

Don Benigno's children—who were somewhat older than myself—were my closest companions. We were, indeed, more like sisters together, than young mistresses and maid. As for my dear godfather and Doña Mercedes — they treated me as a pet child.

Before I had turned fourteen, I was already a grown woman, and, as far as outward appearance, as white as it is possible for my caste to be. With the exception of my lips, which are, as you observe, somewhat *prononcé*, and the whites of my eyes, which are slightly tinged with yellow, there is no perceptible difference between me and those creoles whose origin is less doubtful than my own.

Despite, however, my personal attractions, I was fully conscious of the nice distinction between white and white about which the people of my country are so jealously exacting; and my dark origin always formed a barrier between me and my thoroughbred sisters. Whenever Don Benigno, or his family, addressed me as 'Mulatica,' 'Chinita,' or 'Negrita,' I sometimes thought of the literal meaning of those endearing epithets!

Tunicú, as you know, was always a frequent visitor at Don Benigno's tertulia, but at the period to which I now

refer, he used to pass some hours with us during the day-time. I think Tunicú always admired me more than he did Don Benigno's daughters, and now that I was a grown woman, he often gave expression to his sentiments. I was by no means insensible to Tunicú's attentions, for he was a handsome young gentleman, with a dark brown moustache and imperial to match. His complexion, too, was several shades darker than my own, though this, of course, did not detract from the purity of his descent, which was apparent in the clear white of his eyeballs, the transparent pink of his finger nails, and other signs peculiar to offspring of white parents.

Our admiration for one another gradually developed itself into something more serious, until one day Tunicú gave me to understand that he loved me truly. I think he was sincere, at least I chose to believe so, and, besides, he gave daily proof of his preference for me to the whitest ladies of his acquaintance.

Notwithstanding this, the wide gulf of origin which existed between Tunicú and me could not be concealed, and was continually made manifest. My white lover was passionately fond of dancing, and frequently attended at the balls given at the Philharmonic, where I dared not be seen, save in the capacity of spectator. Crowds of coloured people were permitted, like myself, to watch the dancing from a distance, but none were allowed to trespass upon the hallowed threshold. The same stern rule separated me and my lover at the Retreta in the public square. I might stand, with others of my class, on the broad terrace of the cathedral and watch the promenaders, or listen to the military band; but I dared not be seen with the unsullied

gentlefolks below. Occasionally, Tunicú would desert his white companions, and ascending the broad steps of the cathedral, pass the rest of the evening in my society. On these occasions I should have felt supremely happy, but for the painful thought that Tunicú was sacrificing his position for my sake. The white ladies, who visited at Don Benigno's, though sometimes deigning to notice me, out of compliment to their host, secretly hated and despised me; and if they did not actually scandalise me behind my back, they never forgot to remind those around them of my parentage, and of the unquestionable difference which existed between us.

Then there was my mother, whose cruel fate was ever a dark cloud in my happiest moments with my lover. Thanks to her, I was a free-born woman, while she, alas! still endured a state of bondage. I often wished that I might be enabled to turn to profitable account the education which I had received through Don Benigno's bounty, and in this manner earn enough to pay for my parent's liberty; but, unfortunately, there are no governesses in Cuba, and what white lady of respectability would care to send her child to my school, supposing that I had been able to set up such an establishment?

Sometimes I indulged in the wild hope that Tunicú might one day take me to a foreign country, where my past would be ignored, and where we might be married without regard to the opinion of the world. But my lover, though always full of projects and promises, had never once alluded to the subject of matrimony. People broadly hinted that my Tunicú was a libertine, like some of his companions, and that he had no intention of making me his wife; but

we were both favoured with rivals whose interest it was to speak in these terms. My rivals were the white ladies, who were jealous of Tunicú's attentions to me, and who never forgot to openly express their indignation at the relationship which they knew to exist between me and my lover. Tunicú's rivals were even more numerous; some of them would show their regard for me by serenading under my window with a band of music, upon such occasions as my saint's day, or during the fiestas. I dared not exhibit an indifference to these attentions, without transgressing certain social laws of the country; besides, I found that Tunicú himself did not disapprove of them—he never explained why, but I suppose he considered these little attentions as a sort of acknowledgment of his good taste, or, perhaps, they afforded a proof to him of my constancy.

The boldest of my admirers was a young half-caste called Frasquito, whose mulatto-father was a wealthy tobacco trader and held a high position among the Cuban merchants.

Frasquito was an occasional visitor at Don Benigno's, for, being an accomplished musician, he was a great acquisition when a dance was given at our residence. Once he composed a Cuban danza, and dedicated it to me, calling it after my name: 'La Bella Ermiña.'

Frasquito was perfectly aware of my relations with Tunicú, but he must have regarded them with the same levity as others did; for, one day, happening to be alone with my admirer, he, to my great confusion and surprise, made me an offer of marriage; assuring me that his father had already approved of his choice, and promising that if I would accept him for a husband, he would, previous to

the marriage ceremony, procure my beloved mother's liberty.

I fear that my reply was unsatisfactory to both of us. I could not tell him with truth that I was betrothed to another, because, though that other had long appropriated my heart, he had never openly asked my hand. It was equally difficult to show why I did not avail myself of this opportunity for effecting my mother's emancipation; and Frasquito knew too well that I would make any personal sacrifice to release my beloved parent from bondage.

I, however, told Frasquito that his offer had so taken me by surprise, that he must give me time to consider of it, and that in the meanwhile he must never allude to the subject.

Tunicú, to whom alone I confided what had passed between me and my admirer, scouted the notion of my alliance with the 'son of a nigger,' as he expressed it; but strange to tell, he did not seem angry at the fact of matrimony having been proposed by another.

'You are too fair and too refined,' said he, 'for the son of a black man. When you marry, you must be wedded to somebody having better antecedents than that, Ermiña mia.'

I felt the truth of his remark, and now began to consider my late offer in the light of an insult. The mulatto's pretensions to my hand must surely, I thought, have been induced by his knowledge of my birth, for he would not have ventured to make such a proposal to a white woman; and perfectly aware of my secret attachment, he seemed to have implied that I was incapable of commanding the true love of a white man. Impressed with these reflections, I

resolved to test the truth of the mulatto's inuendos, and, for the first time, I broached to Tunicú the subject nearest my heart.

'Do you think, mi amor,' said I to my lover, 'that I shall ever marry as well as you could desire?'

Tunicú paused, before replying to my question, and then observed—turning his gaze from me as he spoke:—

'Why should not mi Ermiña marry well? She is young, beautiful, accomplished—'

—'and the daughter of a slave!' I added; my eyes moistening as I uttered the terrible words.

For a few moments my lover remained silent and pensive. Then recovering himself, he began to converse in his old, confident, assuring manner, gratifying my imagination with pictures of events which were never to happen, and promising things impossible to be realised. At least nothing ever did happen as Tunicú had predicted, while one event shortly transpired which in his wildest dreams had never occurred to him.

That event was the Cuban insurrection, which, as you know, has already affected the lives of hundreds of my unhappy countrymen and countrywomen; but in what manner it would concern our future destinies, neither Tunicú nor I could possibly foretell.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MULATTO GIRL (*continued*).

The Slave Trade—Ermiña and her Lover—Panics—'Los Insurrectos' *v.* 'Los Voluntarios'—A Wounded Patriot—Spanish Law and Cuban Law—The 'Mambís'—A Promise—An Alarm—All 's Well that Ends Well.

YOU already know how, during the early stages of the Cuban revolution, the inhabitants of Santiago were called upon to enroll themselves as volunteers; that those who evaded the order were regarded with suspicion, in many cases arrested, and occasionally shot after a mock trial; that others who preferred to abandon the town, were punished for their want of loyalty to their rulers, who confiscated their property. My good benefactor, Don Benigno, was too old to enlist and even more disinclined to fight against his countrymen, the rebels; so when the cholera broke out, he made this a pretext for escaping the vigilance of the authorities, and fled with his family and belongings to a farm on his sugar estate. My mother would have accompanied us, but for a circumstance which obliged her to remain in the town. Her rightful owner, Don Vicente, had in one day lost half his fortune; the rebels having encamped at his principal estate and utterly despoiled it. Four hundred negroes employed on this estate had joined the revolutionists, and as each slave was valued, on the average,

at five hundred dollars, the loss which Don Vicente sustained may be easily estimated. To provide against fresh losses, Don Vicente determined to sell all that still remained to him, and embark with his family for a more peaceful country. He hoped to realise a large amount from the sale of his town slaves, and as my mother represented no insignificant item in this valuable property, she was, of course, included in the list of vendibles. I was in despair!

'Tunicú, del alma!' said I to my lover, 'if you are as devoted to me as you profess to be, buy—borrow—beg my beloved parent; but don't let her fall into strange hands!' My dread lest she should become the property of an utter stranger, drove me to this appeal.

Tunicú was equal to the occasion, as he always was; whether with the same disappointing result in view, I could not tell.

'Ermiña de mi corazon!' he replied, 'I am not in a position to buy your mother. Don Benigno has already borrowed her and must now return her. To beg her is out of the question. But I think I have a more practical plan. It may not agree with the laws of this country, and it must be attended with great personal risk; but I will try it.'

I looked inquiringly.

'I am aware,' continued Tunicú, with one of his pleasant smiles, 'that in the course of true love it rarely happens that in order to prove his affection for his mistress, the lover must first elope with his lady-love's mother; but circumstances create strange situations, and under the present circumstances, I see no other alternative than to run away with your parent.'

Conscious of the great risk attending such an enterprise,

and of the terrible consequences which would inevitably result from an untimely discovery, I begged that Tunicú would reveal to me his plan of operations. But to this he objected.

'No,' said he, 'I have found of late that my outspoken projects have exhausted themselves in words, so you must allow me, for this once, to keep my own counsel.'

My lover's unusual reply somehow inspired me with greater confidence than anything he had ever uttered: so, woman though I was, I determined to restrain my curiosity.

'Whatever your plan may be, dearest Tunicú,' said I, 'I agree to it blindly.'

'Then,' said he, 'you will also agree to our temporary separation. You will accompany my uncle to the farm?'

To this I also, though reluctantly, acceded.

So my mother was returned to Don Vicente, with whose family she was to reside until a purchaser was found. Tunicú remained in town; while I and Don Benigno's family were conveyed in a covered cart drawn by oxen to the farm-house.

We arrived opportunely. The town which we had left was, as you know, already in a state of siege, and shortly after our departure, Count Valmaseda's dreadful manifesto, announcing that every man, woman, and child who should be discovered in certain districts of the country were to be shot like dogs, was published. We dared not now venture beyond the limits of the farm-grounds, for the report of fire-arms was continually heard in the neighbouring woods. Don Benigno was in daily fear lest the volunteers should visit our retreat, for he was well acquainted with the details of their past iniquities.

Early one morning we were awakened by a negro, who hastened to the farm-house, shouting as he came: 'Los Insurrectos! Los Insurrectos!'

'The insurgents are coming!' was the signal of alarm usually adopted by non-combatants, because the insurgents, and not the volunteers, were said to be the scarecrows of our island.

It was, however, 'Los Voluntarios' and not 'Los Insurrectos' this time, for a party of volunteers were visible on a distant eminence.

Our black sentinel, however, still persisted in shouting, 'Los Insurrectos!' The same cry was echoed by other negroes, who, with their faces tinged with the pale green of a black's fear, came running towards us with the information that three insurgents were riding within a mile of our habitation. The statement proved correct, for presently three horsemen arrived at the farm. All three were armed with revolvers, and short swords called 'machetes,' and they were attired in brown holland blouses, buff-coloured shoes, and Panama hats.

One of these men appeared to be suffering great bodily pain, but his face was so besmeared with dirt and blood, that we could scarcely tell whether he was a mulatto or a white man. The poor fellow had been seriously wounded, and groaned in agony as Don Benigno's slaves assisted him to dismount.

After he had been placed upon a catre in one of our apartments and revived with a draught of aguardiente, the invalid smiled mournfully around him, and then, to our unspeakable astonishment, inquired whether we did not recognise in him Don Benigno's nephew!

I will not describe the scene which followed this disclosure, but I will endeavour to repeat to you what Tunicú had now to reveal. His first words caused me great happiness; though the strange tone in which they were uttered seemed scarcely to correspond with the good news conveyed in them.

'Your mother,' said he, glancing in my direction, 'is free!'

He now told us how, in spite of his efforts to steal my dear parent, Don Vicente had succeeded in selling her to a brutal slave-trader, who contemplated employing her as a common labourer at a coffee plantation, and how, being aware of this, my lover determined to save her from such a terrible fate.

Parties of young Cubans were then secretly planning expeditions into the heart of the country, where their compatriots in arms were concealed, and this being known to my lover, he lost no time in enrolling himself among them. A party of these young men were on the eve of departing on their rebellious or patriotic mission, and as my mother's new master had already started for his plantation with his recent purchases and half-a-dozen armed negroes, Tunicú persuaded his companions to help him to rescue my parent. Well armed, well acquainted with the roads of their intricate country, and mounted on fast trotting horses, the little band of warriors followed in the track of the slave-owner, and, after some hours of hard riding, they succeeded in overtaking him. They then demanded, in the name of 'Cuban justice,' every slave in his possession, declaring, that now the Cuban people had risen in defence of their rights and

for the abolition of slavery, they were no longer amenable to Spanish law.

'We are all Cubans,' said they, 'and well armed, as you see; and we intend to fight for both causes whenever an opportunity presents itself.'

Hostile measures were, however, quite unnecessary in this instance. The eloquence of my brave countrymen sufficed to create a mutiny among the trader's black body-guard, who with one accord came over to the enemy. In short, the slaves were all released, and their late owner, after vowing to be avenged, rode off to the nearest garrison for the purpose of reporting to the authorities what had happened, and, if possible, obtain redress for the wrongs he had sustained. In the meantime the victorious party hastened to join their brethren in arms, some of whom were encamped in one of the strong fortifications which nature so generously provides in our well-wooded mountains. But they had scarcely reached this part of the country, when a battalion of volunteers, guided by the slave-trader, went in pursuit of them.

Tunicú then described an encounter which afterwards took place between the latter and the patriots. He said that for upwards of an hour shots were exchanged, but with no advantage to either side; till the slave-trader (doubtless acquainted with the roads of this intricate country) suddenly discovered an opening in the forest. Through this opening he, followed by a number of the volunteers, entered, and, sheltered by the surrounding foliage and trees, took deadly aim at those of their enemies who were exposed to their view. Many of my countrymen fell in this cruel slaughter, and amongst them were two of the recently captured

slaves. Horrible to relate, one of these slaves was my mother. Seeing her fall, Tunicú boldly advanced towards the spot whence the firing proceeded, and there beheld the slave-trader who, he had no doubt, was my parent's assassin. Without a moment's hesitation, Tunicú shot this man dead with his revolver. A dozen rifles were levelled at the daring fellow as he hastened to return to his companions, and unfortunately a bullet lodged in his side.

My warlike countrymen now retreated to a safe part of the forest, and here they remained, till the patience and the ammunition of their assailants were exhausted.

As soon as my lover was sufficiently recovered from his wound, he was escorted by two of his companions to Don Benigno's farm, where they duly arrived.

How shall I describe the agony which Tunicú's narrative caused me! My mother was indeed free, and by the hand of her own master; but alas! how dearly was her liberty purchased! I consoled myself with the reflection that my dear parent had been saved from a fate such as was in store for her had she been recaptured by her owner. Our anxiety was now devoted to my lover, who had suffered considerably from his long ride to the farm. We were able to attend the invalid unmolested; though news reached us that the insurrection was spreading in all directions, and we were in constant fear that it would reach too near our retreat.

I was happier with my lover during his recovery, than I had ever been. The perils which he had undergone for my sake seemed to have toned down his volatile nature, and although his habit of promising had not wholly deserted him, I had reason to be grateful for at least one sweet promise which he made me!

'Ermiña de mi alma!' said he, one evening that we were alone together, 'my uncle contemplates leaving with you all for North America, there to remain till the revolution is over. I cannot accompany you, but we shall meet there, and if, after your intercourse with the white society of that country—where you will be treated as an equal—your feelings with regard to me are unchanged, we will be married, and I will endeavour to make your life happier than it has hitherto been.'

'Not happier than it is now,' said I.

. . . . . .

'Los Insurrectos!—Los Insurrectos!'

The insurgents again? No; our swarthy sentinels were wrong this time, for presently a dozen Spanish troopers, all armed to the teeth, galloped into our courtyard. We were, of course, greatly alarmed at their appearance; for we had no doubt that they had come to apprehend my lover. We were, however, soon agreeably relieved from our anxiety on this account, by a letter which the officer in command had brought for Don Benigno. This letter came from his future son-in-law, Don Manuel, who, since the commencement of the revolution, had been quartered with his regiment at Manzanillo, not many leagues from our farm. Aware that we had left town for Don Benigno's plantation, and conscious of the danger which was now threatening every district in the eastern extremity of the island, Don Manuel proposed that we should join him without delay at Manzanillo, and thence proceed to Havana, to which the young officer was shortly to be transferred. As yet perfect tranquillity reigned at the Cuban capital; and 'here,'

suggested Don Manuel, 'we might remain,' under his official protection, 'until the rebellion was suppressed.'

'The rest of her story,' says Don Benigno, breaking in at this point of it, 'is soon told. The soldiers remained with us for two or three days while we prepared for our departure, and in the meantime they discussed the merits of our fried bananas with boiled rice, our bacalao and casabe, our tasajo, our chimbombo, our ajiaco and our Catalan wine. Then, consigning my plantation to the care of my trusty major-domo, we all left for Manzanillo, under our military escort. Shortly after our arrival, Tunicú set sail for North America; for Don Manuel was of opinion that unless my nephew joined the Mambís (nickname for the rebellious party), it would not be safe for him to remain in any part of the Ever-faithful Isle. But we hope to meet him there, and, meanwhile we intend to practise those virtues of patience and amiability which have hitherto served us so well—eh, mi Ermiña? My daughter's marriage will soon be celebrated, and after the nuptials some of us will, I hope —si Dios quiere—depart for the great city of New York.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

A CUBAN WEDDING.

Open Engagements—A Marriage Ceremony—A Wedding Breakfast—The Newly-Married Couple.

A NUMBER of Don Benigno's relatives and friends have, like ourselves, taken refuge in the peaceful city of Havana. Some of them purpose remaining here till affairs at Santiago are more settled, while others, like Don Benigno, intend to make New York their temporary abode.

Surrounded by his friends, the Don begins to feel at home again. Every evening he holds a tertulia at his temporary residence, as of old, and upon these occasions I recognise many familiar faces. Señor Esteban, the lawyer, Don Magin, the merchant, and Don Felipe, the sugar planter, are the Don's guests again. Doctor Francisco and his family have also arrived in Havana, en route for Europe: for even our medical friend has been in danger of arrest for having administered to some wounded 'patriots' at a village near Santiago.

Don Manuel is of course a constant visitor at Don Benigno's, but I do not envy him the term of courtship which precedes the marriage, nor is the ceremony itself very inviting.

In his capacity of lover, Don Manuel is bound to submit

to many hardships. He may not meet his fiancée alone under any circumstances; her society must be enjoyed only in the presence of the numerous friends and relatives who visit her at all hours of the day and evening. Then, he is expected to return some of these visits, in company with his future bride, her mother and sister. He must also submit to certain formalities required of him by the priest who is to unite the 'promessi sposi,' and the most irksome of these is that of confession. Paquita confesses, and that is nothing new to her, but it is otherwise with the young officer. In short, until Don Manuel is actually a happy husband, his position is by no means enviable, and for my own part, I would gladly relinquish two years of married life in Cuba for half an hour's secret love-making at a certain grated window!

The wearisome ordeal at length comes to an end—the nuptial day arrives. The ceremony, such as it is, takes place very late in the night; indeed, it is early morning before Don Manuel and his male friends reach the cathedral, where the event is to be celebrated. A single bell tolls like a funeral knell as we enter a small chapel connected with the sacred edifice. It is a dreary apartment, dismally lighted with two long wax candles. Nobody is present, save Don Manuel, the male friends already mentioned, and the sacristan, who enlivens us by trying (and failing) to beautify, with false flowers and false candles, a miserable altar-piece at one extremity of the chapel. The young officer's importance as a bridegroom is not at present appreciated, either by himself or by his friends, with whom he converses upon indifferent subjects, and who, like myself, are attired in ordinary walking costume.

Presently a Quitrin, drawn by a couple of mules, with a black postilion in jack-boots, halts without. The bride, accompanied by her mother and a friend, alight, and, without taking notice of anybody in particular, pass silently into the chapel. The importance of Don Manuel's position does not reveal itself by this act, nor is it considerably improved, when the ecclesiastic, who is to marry the happy pair, emerges from a dark corner, smiles artificially around him, and exhausts the rest of his amiability with the ladies. But the priest is not so unconscious of Don Manuel as that gentleman supposes. Soon he singles the officer out from the group of males, and bids him follow the bride, and his future mother-in-law, into an adjacent chamber. But little is required of the bridegroom besides his signature to a paper, which he does not read; and when the holy man has addressed something or other to him in the Latin language, he is politely requested to withdraw. Shortly after Don Manuel's retirement, the bride and her escort issue from the mysterious chamber, and, after saluting us all round, take their departure and drive away. Don Manuel's distinguished position seems to be scarcely increased by these proceedings; but when his friends congratulate him, the lights of the chapel are extinguished, and the decorations on the miserable altar-piece are stowed away, he endeavours to realise the feelings of a married man. Don Manuel follows his friends as they lead the way to the bride's parental roof, consoling himself with newly-rolled cigarettes as he walks along.

It is nearly two A.M. before we reach the scene of the festivities, where most of the guests are already assembled. A long table has been tastefully arranged with sweetmeats,

cakes, fruit, wine, and other luxuries, and some of the guests, whose appetites could not be restrained, have already inaugurated the festivities. Much confusion, uproar, and struggling after dainties peculiar to a Cuban banquet, prevail, and it is not without an effort that the young officer contrives at last to find a place near his bride. Healths are drunk and responded to incessantly, and often simultaneously: rather, as it would seem, for the excuse of drinking champagne and English bottled ale, than from motives of sentiment.

When enough cigarettes have been smoked, and enough wine and beer have been disposed of, all the company rises with one accord. The ladies throw light veils across their shoulders, the gentlemen don their panamas; and the bride and her mother, together with the bridegroom and all the guests, followed by an army of black domestics, leave Don Benigno's habitation, and marching in noisy procession along the narrow streets, arrive at the bride's future home. It is a one-storied dwelling with marble floors and whitewashed walls, and is furnished with bran-new cane-bottomed chairs and other adornments belonging to a Cuban residence. The huge doors and windows of every apartment are thrown open to their widest, and the interior being brilliantly lighted with gas, the view from the street is almost as complete as within the premises. Everybody crowds into the latter, and examines the arrangements of each chamber with as deep an interest as if they were wandering through an old baronial mansion with cards of invitation from its absent owner. The reception-room, the comedor or dining-room, the out-houses round the patio or court-yard, are carefully inspected by the throng, who are irrepressible even

in respect to the dormitory assigned for the use of the bridegroom, and that allotted to the bride, and situated in quite a different quarter.

Everybody's curiosity being satisfied, everybody, save the newly-married pair and a few black domestics, is wished a 'muy buenas noches,' or, more correctly speaking (for the hour is 4 A.M.), a very good morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

CUBANS IN NEW YORK.

The Morro Castle again—Summer and Winter—Cuban Refugees—Filli-busters—'Los Laborantes' of New York and their Work—American Sympathisers.

I AM a prisoner in the Morro Castle again, and this time my fellow captives are more numerous. We occupy separate apartments. The chamber which has been allotted to me is considerably smaller than that of the fortress at Santiago. So small that the floor measures barely four feet in width, and seated in my narrow cot, my head approaches within a few inches of the ceiling. Don Benigno, his wife, his unmarried daughter, and the pretty Ermiña, together with a score of Cuban families, are all imprisoned in the same stronghold, whence there is no escape. For we are encompassed on every side by a moat so deep and so wide that no engineering skill would avail to connect us with terra firma.

This is, however, not the Havana Morro, nor is it the fortress at Santiago de Cuba; but an American steamer called the 'Morro Castle' and bound for New York, where —wind and weather permitting—we shall all arrive, in little more than four days!

Although the month is January, the atmosphere is still sultry and oppressive; so much so that most of the pas-

sengers prefer to sleep on deck. But on the morning of the third day of our voyage, there is a perceptible change in the temperature. The passengers are seen to shiver and to huddle together in warm corners of the cabin. Everybody has exchanged his or her summer clothing for warmer vestments. The ladies appear no more in light muslin dresses, and without any head covering. The gentlemen have eschewed their suits of white drill and Panama hats, and have assumed heavy over-coats and flannel under-clothing. It is a 'nipping and an eager air,' closely resembling winter. and reminding everybody of the fact, that in one short hour we have tripped lightly from the perpetual summer of the tropics into the coldest season of the north. Some sea water which had been hauled up in a bucket half an hour ago was perfectly tepid, and now when the bucket is lowered and raised we are amazed to find that the contents are icy cold!

Next day the liquid in our water jugs is discovered to be in a freezing condition, and fires have been lighted in all the stoves. But our chilly Creoles derive little or no warmth from these artificial means, although they are swathed in garments ten inches deep.

Great is the joy when the 'Morro Castle' at last sails into the wide and picturesque harbour of the great American city, and when we have safely landed, satisfied the Custom-house officers, and are finally lodged in a comfortable hotel in Broadway, our happiness is complete.

Numbers of Cuban families are already encamped in the hotel which Don Benigno has selected for himself, family and friend, and at the table d'hôte where we take our first American meal, the conversation is held exclusively in the Spanish language. Don Benigno is delighted to find

himself among his countrymen again, and as the city is over-run with Cuban refugees, he soon meets many of his old friends. Some of them tell him that, having had their property confiscated, and being too old to take part in the revolution, they intend to remain in America, where they hope to improve their fortunes; while the more able-bodied are recruiting with a view to certain secret expeditions to Cuba.

Tunicú, who joins us shortly after our arrival, is of course overjoyed at our appearance, and welcomes some of us literally with 'open arms!' Having passed some weeks in New York, he is of course already acquainted with everybody of note in the city, and is familiar with American ways. He tells us all about the Cuban 'Laborantes' of New York, and how they are labouring in behalf of their bellicose countrymen. How juntas are held, and how the Cuban ladies take a prominent part in these meetings, and provide funds for the relief of their sick and wounded compatriots in arms. Tunicú informs us that a grand bazaar, with this object in view, is now being promoted by these energetic señoras, and when Doña Mercedes hears of this, she and her daughters are soon busy at their favourite occupation. Tunicú says that the proceeds of the bazaar will not be wholly devoted to the purpose for which it is publicly announced, but that a large amount will be set apart for the purchase of arms and accoutrements; it being whispered that another filli-bustering expedition is contemplated, and that great hopes are entertained of its safe departure from America. He says that an important landing has been lately effected at Guanaja—a small town on the Cuban coast—where Manuel Quesada, the newly-appointed general of the Cuban army,

has arrived with eighty well-drilled men, 2,700 muskets and necessary ammunition.

Besides the bazaar money, large amounts are raised by giving public concerts and by an occasional dramatic performance at one of the Bowery theatres, at which a stirring drama founded on the Cuban revolution is presented.

The concerts, however, prove more attractive and remunerative; especially if it is announced that a young and lovely Creole, attired as 'Liberty' and holding a Cuban flag in her hand, will sing a patriotic ballad. Equally effective are recitals from the famous Cuban poets—Heredia and Placida. When the 'Himno del Desterrado,' by the first-named author, is given, it is always received with great applause by the Cuban members of the audience and by those who understand the beautiful language in which this favourite poem is written. But nothing pleases the mixed audience of Cubans and Americans half so well as when a renowned pianist favours them with a performance on the piano of a 'Danza Criolla.' At the first strains of their patriotic melody, the Creoles present become wild with enthusiasm. The Cuban ladies wave their handkerchiefs with delight, while their brother-patriots stand on their seats, and for the moment drown their favourite music with loud and prolonged cheering, accompanied by shouts of 'Viva Cuba libre!' (Long live free Cuba!) 'Muerte á España!' (Death to Spain!) and other patriotic sentiments.

The American people are unanimous in their sympathy for the Cuban cause, and the sentiment is popular even with the New York shopkeepers, who already offer for sale 'Cravats à la Cespedes,' 'Insurrectionary Inkstands,' and 'Patriot Pockethandkerchiefs.'

Important meetings, too, are held at Cooper's Institute, Steinway Hall, and other public places, at each of which a great concourse of American sympathisers gathers. Many eminent orators preside at these meetings, and endeavour with all their eloquence to urge upon the Congress at Washington the necessity for immediate recognition of the rights of the Cuban belligerents. Annexation is, of course, suggested, and slavery loudly denounced.

One eloquent speaker is of opinion that the present struggle of the Cubans for independence and self-government belongs to the same category as the American Revolution in 1776; that it should excite the sympathy of all friends of popular progress, and that it deserves every kind of assistance that other nations may be able to render.

Another well-known orator, connected with the church, declares that 'the Cuban cause is just, and that the wrongs against which the Cubans have revolted are such as should arouse the indignation of mankind, inasmuch as these wrongs include taxation without representation, the forced maintenance of slavery, the exclusion of all natives of the island from public service, the denial of the right to bear arms and of all the sacred privileges of citizenship and nationality.'

A third speaker avers, among other sentiments, that, in proclaiming the abolition of slavery, the patriots of Cuba have given conclusive evidence that they share the most substantial ideas of modern democracy, and that their political principles are in unison with those which inspire and govern the profoundest thinkers and statesmen of the age. That while men of free minds in all countries must

view with interest and hope the uprising in Cuba, 'we, as citizens of the Republic of North America, and near neighbours of the beautiful and productive island, recognise a special obligation towards those patriots who are toiling and fighting for its emancipation from Spanish tyranny.'

'It is the duty of our Government,' concludes another speaker, amidst loud and prolonged applause, 'to recognise the belligerent rights of the Cubans at the earliest practicable moment, and thus to show the world, that the American nation is always on the side of those who contend against despotism and oppression; and we earnestly entreat the Executive at Washington that there may be no unnecessary delay in dealing with this important subject.'

But in spite of these demonstrations of public sympathy, the mighty House of Representatives cannot be induced to join in the popular sentiment. Memorials are addressed to the American President, and persons of influence labour in behalf of the Cuban cause. Upon one occasion a party of Cuba's fairest daughters 'interview' the President's wife and secretary, but nothing comes of it except more sympathy and more able editorials in the New York papers, in which it is again suggested that a bold and decisive policy should be commenced with regard to Cuba and to American interests there, and that the shortest way to settle now and for ever all difficulty relative to that island, is to send out a powerful fleet and to recognise the independence of the people of the Pearl of the Antilles.

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